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- Arnold Kreichting, Executive Producer Creative Graphics, Holland





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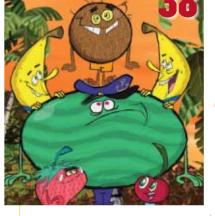
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On the Cover. Disney has some big plans for Chicken Little. MIPCOM 2005 Market Cover: Jane and the Dragon (C) 2005 Weta Productions Ltd./Nelvana Limited. Produced in association with YTV. YTV is a trademark of Corus Entertainment. All rights

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just got back from the wonderful International Animation Festival at Ottawa. It was certainly a privilege to be able to dive into a world of animated gems, hang out with fellow toonheads and forget about gas prices and hurricane horrors of the real world for a few days.

In addition to all the great projects we took to our hearts and minds (which you'll be reading about in the months to come on these

pages), we were were also invited to two days of excellent panels and roundtables. My hat's off to the hardworking Ottawa staff-especially managing director Kelly Neall, artistic director Chris Robinson and workshop director Maral Mohammadian—who prepared such a hearty feast.

Here are some of the key points I took away from the panels: Don't be seduced by trends. If you're going to launch your project in the new multi-platform universe, be ready to think like a teenager! Development execs love pitches that have a specific target audience and come with an artistic



vision and a clear understanding of the marketplace. And you could have a real winner on your hands if your show looks different than everything out there, if it offers edgy textures and visuals, or if it teaches a specific skill. More important, if you can keep your audience laughing and/or guessing, then you've hit the jackpot.

One of the confab's highlights was a speech delivered by Linda Simensky, a widely respected veteran of the business who is currently the senior director of children's programming at PBS. She had to get in front of the microphone early in the morning, at a time when most of the attendees were injecting caffeine directly to their veins to stay awake. But her heartfelt sentiments and wisdom managed to rile us all up. She spoke about how savvy today's children are when it comes to judging what they see on TV and the importance of staying innovative. "Kids today can tell you if the show is made by Disney, Nickelodeon or Cartoon Network," she noted. "They also know that everything that Pixar does is very cool. We have to make sure we raise the innovation dial way up high, because if we don't, they're just going to turn off the TV and watch Toy Story 17 over and over again."

She also stressed the importance of creating TV shows with characters that kids really love, just like the ones we admired when we were children. She also praised people in the TV business who move the medium forward by taking chances. "Sure, it's going to be scary," she said. "But that's what being innovative is all about. It's got to be scary. It's much worse to do the same thing as everyone else. How great would it be to say that I lost my job because I did too many cool and innovative things?" Words to tattoo on your forehead or carve on your computer mouse as the fall season officially launches on TV and theaters.

> amin Ramin Zahed Editor-in-Chief rzahed@animationmagazine.net

Quote of the Month



The difficult issues of avian flatulence and bulimia are finally addressed. Vividly."

--Entertainment Weekly's film critic, Scott Brown, on the summer's CG-animated release, Valiant.

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The Animation Planner November

Lions Gate releases the Furo-Canadian coproduction *Pinocchio* 3000 on DVD today.



3-6 The Virtuality confab will put you in the middle of the CG action in Torino. Italy (http:// virtualityconference.it).

4 Disney's *Chicken* Little is all hatched up and ready to fly the coop in theaters today. Also the **Taipei Golden Horse Film** Festival festival begins today thru the 17th (www.goldenhorse.org. tw/2005).



3 Learn to do it in Portuguese at the annual Cinanima festival in Espino, Portugal (www. cinanima.pt).

8 Take out a loan. You're going to need some major dinero for the holiday DVDs out today: Among the many titles up for grabs: Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers, Vol. 1; DuckTales, Vol. 1; One Piece, Vol. 2; and What's New Scooby-Doo? Vol. 7.

Sony's **Zathura** should feature a lot of cool vfx images. Based on a book by Chris Van Allsburg and directed by Jon Favreau (E/f), the pic opens in theaters today.



14-20 Family movies are spotlighted at The Golden **Elephant** festival in Hyderabad, India (www.cfsindia. org).

15 It's a big week for classic Hanna Barbera releases on DVD: Out today are The Flintstones: 4th Season; The Yogi Bear Show: Complete Series and Huckleberry Hound, Vol.

> 1. Also available are Madagasgar, Home Movies: Season 3 and the King Kong box set.



18 Time for more magical adventures for the angst-ridden boy wizard and his pals in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire in theaters today.

f 22 Get ready to watch the glorious new DVD versions of Gundam Seed: Movie 3. The Polar Express and Wolf's Rain: Limited Complete **Collection** this week. Also great for the holiday gift-giving season: King of the Hill: Season 5.

29 Three excellent animated TV packages arrive in DVD stores: Family Guy, Vol. 3, Hi Hi Puffy Ami Yumi: Let's Go and Rock Forever and Mission Hill: Complete Series.

To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail sgurman@animationmagazine.net

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FRAME-BY-FRAME



FlickerLab's Fierce Titles



he fact that actress Diane Lane plays a New York city massage therapist in director Griffin Dunne's new movie Fierce People would be enough reason for audiences to check out the film en masse. But the pic

has another big drawing point: a cool animated title sequence designed by the clever folks at New York studio FlickerLab. Company founder and animation director Harold Moss, who also directed the animated sequence A Brief History of the USA for Michael Moore's Bowling for Columbine, incorporates designs based on cave drawings and tribal art in this sequence.

"There's a Shaman-like character in the film who uses chalk drawings to foretell the future," says the New York-based Moss. "We knew we wanted to use this primitivist style, with chalk drawings and hand-drawn textures reflected in the stones and sidewalks of the city. We also created some animation with a spirit character featured in the movie, and although the set pieces aren't in the final version of the film, they will probably be included on the film's DVD."

The FlickerLab team first created the animation in Flash, then scanned in handdrawn pencil images and composited in After Effects, and finally used Photoshop to bring the credits to life. "We wanted the titles to have a very subtle, organic and hand-drawn feel to them," says Moss, who has also worked on promos for A&E's Growing Up Gotti, the credits for Bravo's Celebrity Poker Showdown and segments on Drew Carey's Green Screen Show. "We do most of our 2D style of animation in Flash these days. It's a great tool and we keep going back to it."

Founded in 2000, Flickerlab recently named indie producer and frequent collaborator Tammy Walters as partner. Overall, Moss notes, it's been a very productive period for his company. "We seem to have really hit our creative groove. There were a couple of real dog years after Sept. 11 and the crash of the tech market, but right now we seem to be in the middle of a very active period." ■

— Ramin Zahed

Animated Box Office Derby

Title	Studio	U.S. Gross	Worldwide Gross
	DreamWorks		
1. Madagascar	Dreamworks	\$ 192.3 million	\$509.8m
2. The Polar Express	Warner Bros.	\$162.8 million	\$217.3m
3. Robots	Fox	\$128.2 million	\$259.6m
4. Valiant	Disney	\$18.5 million	\$53.6m
5. Pooh's Heffalump Movie	Disney	\$18.1 million	\$30.3m
6. Howl's Moving Castle	Disney	\$4.7 million	\$6.9m
7. Steamboy	Sony	\$442,716	\$606,539

Still to come in 2005: Tim Burton's Corpse Bride (Warner Bros.), Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (DreamWorks) and Chicken Little (Disney)

Source: Variety 8/26/05

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THE RACE OF ALL RACES... IS ABOUT TO BEEN







INTERspectacular's Spectacular Work

ew York-based concept and design house INTERspectacular is having such a whirlwind of animated activities this fall it's hard to believe it opened its doors only two years ago. Not only did four of the boutique's awesome animated spots for Comedy Central screen at the Ottawa Animation Festival last month, it has also delivered some striking animated openers for the third season of PBS' series, Art:21 Art in the Twenty-First Century. Focusing on the show's four separate themes of power, memory, structures and play, INTERspectacular forged an innovative design and one specific animated project featuring actress Isabella Rosellini.

"Initially, we had an idea about how we wanted the 45-second spots to look, but we ended up scrapping some of the initial scripts which didn't work," says Luis Blanco, co-founder and creative director at INTERspectacular. "We ended up paying attention to each celebrity and figured a way to explore each of the shows' themes as our creative engine."

A phone interview with Rosellini, for example, led to the inspiration for an animated collage piece. After talking



to the acclaimed actress about her childhood and her pivotal memories, the team decided to shoot her frame by frame using a high-speed digital still camera. "We then animated her using After Effects and building it in post, using other photos and collage elements," says co-founder and creative director Michael Uman. "Devin Clark, our resident animator, delivered the animation in three weeks."

Uman and Blanco both say that using an actress of Rosellini's stature in an animated piece worked in their favor. "Her opener explores the importance of

memory, and that's why the collage and abbreviated motion approach speaks more directly to the dream logic aspect of the piece," explains Blanco.

The INTERspectacular gang are also working on some designing and branding campaigns for Comedy Central's new mobile ventures. They also finished an eve-catching

I.D. for the cabler that pays homage to the classic black-and-white animated shorts of the 1930s. Using illustrations by Tristan Eaton, animator Clark created the piece with Illustrator and After Effects. It certainly sounds like INTERspectacular has found another clever way to bridge Toontown's glorious past with its high-tech future. ■

Fine-Tooning Your Palate

E ver since the 2004 movie *Sideways* ignited a national obsession with wine, we've been dying to see how the craze would affect the world of animation. Our prayers were answered a few months ago when we heard that a new Oregon winery, Et Fille Wines, has brought two animation industry veterans together.



Howard Mozeico, CEO of Animation Toolworks, the company that makes the Lunch-



Box Sync, has been making wine for over 20 years. At the prodding of his daughter and several wine industry friends, he launched his own winery in 2003. The small, family-run, Oregon winery specializing in pinot noir is called Et Fille, which is French for "and daughter," to honor the father-and-daughter team that makes these wines.

When it came time to design the winery's label, Mozeico turned to Michael Dudok de Wit, whose beautiful animated short, Father and Daughter, won an Oscar in 2001. "I wanted a

logo which imparted the feel for the father and daughter relationship," says Mozeico. "So, naturally, I turned to Michael. I had seen his work at Annecy and Ottawa and thought both the film and his style were a perfect match."■

To order a bottle of this fine, well-animated wine, call 1-503-449-5030 or visit www.etfillewines.com.

Bunny **Parodies** Hoppin' on Starz



aving built a strong following on the web, Jennifer Shiman's 30-second, animated bunny reenactments of popular movies hit cable television as a Starz On Demand offering on April 1. Since its launch, the Flash-animated property has generated more than 1.6 million viewings. Featuring all-bunny casts, Shiman's shorts boil down such iconic films as Jaws, Pulp Fiction, The Shining and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, retelling their stories as bitesized comedies. Parodies of horror films have been the most popular by far. The rabbit reenactment of Freddy vs. Jason was viewed 316,000 times in five months. Other hit films tackled with the bunny formula include Scream, Titanic, The Exorcist, Alien, The Rocky Horror Picture Show and It's a Wonderful Life. They can all be downloaded at the Angry Alien Prods. website, www.angryalien.com. ■

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BOOKS WE LOVE

by Sarah Gurman

The Animated Movie GuideBy Jerry Beck (Chicago Review Press, \$26.95)

In his introduction to The Animated Movie Guide, animation guru Jerry Beck notes, "In November 2004, an unusual event in the history of motion pictures occurred. Three of the top five films of the week, in the box office gross, were animated feature films [The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie, The Polar Express and The Incredibles]." With the animated feature



finally hitting its stride and public interest increasing, it seems that Beck's new tome is just what the toon doctor ordered.

Dishing up release dates, running times, consumer tips and reviews on every animated feature released theatrically in the U.S. (that's over 300 movies in the past 70 years), *The Animated Movie Guide* is a resource heavyweight that deserves a spot on any movie aficionado's book shelf. And Beck goes beyond the cold hard facts; the book includes fun pics from each film that will push your nostalgia buttons and amusing tidbits about some of our favorites. Did you know that Mae Questal, the voice box of Betty Boop from 1931-39, made a comeback appearance 50 years later when she voiced Boop's cameo in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* How about this: The invented Atlantean lingo in Disney's *Atlantis* was created by Mark Okrand, the man behind *Star Trek*'s Vulcan and Klingon languages. Don't worry, there's plenty more where that came from in this exhaustively researched guide.

Designing Sound for AnimationBy Robin Beauchamp (Focal Press, \$34.95)



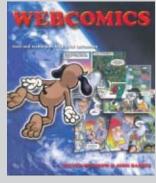
No matter how pretty the cels or how smart the writing, it don't mean a thing if your sound design ain't got that swing. So for all of you audiochallenged animators who want to bring your new short's

soundtrack up to par, Robin Beuchamp's comprehensive Designing Sound for Animation is a must-have. Running the acoustic gamut with chapters about the physics of sound,

differences in audio and visual processing, casting voice talent, smoothing visual edits and production timelines for two-and three-dimensional animation, to name a few, this guide to sound design takes you step by step through an area often neglected in formal animation programs. After leading you from the basic principles of sound all the way through to post-production, Beauchamp holds your hand for one more infinitely helpful chapter that delivers two case studies. This final section outlines the audio design for two student-animated shorts that are included on the book's bonus DVD, giving you the chance to see *Designing Sound for Animation*'s concepts in action. Along with the shorts, the guide's handy DVD comes stocked with sound effects-only tracks, visual demonstrations of production methods and 2D and 3D animatics. Grab a copy and get moving on that cartoon audio makeover. We're all ears.

WebcomicsBy Steven Withrow and John Barber (The Ilex Press Limited, \$29.99)

If your vision of Sunday morning is meaningless without a cup of joe and the paper's funnies at your side, and spring cleaning only serves to create more space for your ever-expanding *Spider-Man* comic-book collection, it's high time you made a foray into the up-and-coming world of webcomics. And what better way to get your feet



wet than spending some time with Steven Withrow and John Barber's Webcomics, an Internet cartoon roundup complete with artist interviews, process photographs, a reference guide with industry information and of course, a spiffy gallery section showcasing webcomics from 21 innovators that will have you drooling (and obsessively surfing the web for the latest strips). Current trailblazers like Ursula Vernon, Shaenon K. Garrity, John Allison and Brendan Cahill describe the unique opportunities this medium affords, including the web's infinite canvas quality, the increased communication possibilities between artist and audience and the immediacy of posting work on the Internet. In addition to discovering the logic behind artists' digital comic affections, Webcomics offers an introduction to various methods for grappling with the logistics of resolution scanning, web file conversion and legal online publishing. Before you know it, you'll be researching domain names and joining the cartoon consumption revolution.

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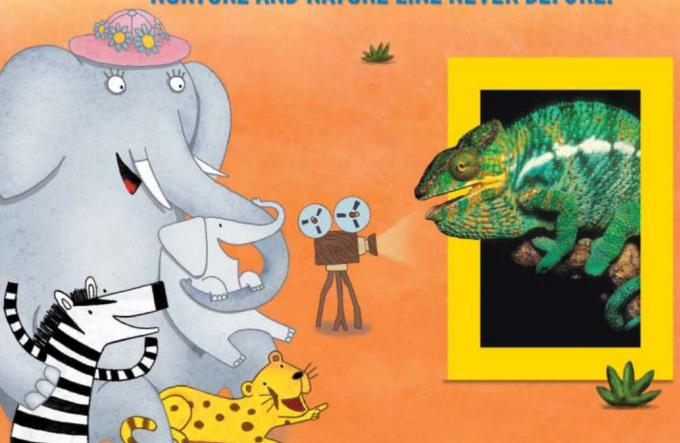




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All Hail the Pumpkin King!

Capcom's The Nightmare Before Christmas: Oogie's Revenge arrives just in time for Halloween! by Ryan Ball

t's been more than two years since Capcom first teased E3 attendees in Los Angeles with news that it was making a video game based on Tim Burton's stop-motion holiday classic, The Nightmare Before Christmas. Now, as Halloween looms and consumers start counting the shopping days until Christmas, the interactive debut of Jack Skellington finally hits retail in the form of The Nightmare Before Christmas: Oogie's Revenge.

According to director Masato Yoshino of Capcom, the development team in Japan internalized the animation process rather than relying solely on the movie for reference. "Over the course of trial and error during development, the animation team had reached the conclusion that it was best if we all became the characters," Yoshino recalls. "The characters and their personalities were already defined in the movie, and it seemed to work well when we acted out each specific character to understand what he or she would or would not do. It was a riot to see everyone posing and moving in an unusual manner in the studio."

Members of the film's creative team helped out with the game as well. Art director Deane Taylor worked with the Capcom staff to rebuild Burton's fantastically macabre world into an interactive environment, even designing all-new areas of Halloween Town for gamers to explore. "It was definitely a joint effort," says Yoshino. "We showed the game to Tim Burton himself and received lots of critical advice, especially on the character movement and expression of the contrast between darkness and light. I think that was the happiest moment—to be able to work with Mr. Burton."

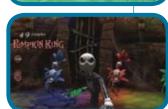
Composer Danny Elfman's original music from the movie was also revisited with lyrics tweaked to match the new story. Yoshino says the early decision to make music a major part of the game ended up creating the toughest challenges. He explains, "All the bossbattle systems in this game are what we call "Musical Battle," in which characters will (1) sing (2) dance and (3) fight-not to mention to the music. This was the most complex element in development."

In addition to being a game, Oogie's Revenge is somewhat of a sequel to Nightmare since it features nearly an hour's worth of animated cut scenes to help move the story along. Yoshino tells us his team studied Burton's film closely and tried to match the look and feel as best as they could with CG using their proprietary animation tools.

Yoshino's favorite part of the development process was working out the musical battle elements, and he thinks gamers will also be most fond of these rousing rumbles that feature real-time costume changes as players switch between the various faces of

Jack Skellington, including Pumpkin King Jack and Santa Jack. Our hero also comes armed with a new weapon, the Soul Robber, which is a glowing, green, ectoplasmic whip that literally takes the spirit out of the competition.

While Capcom's next project is top-secret at the moment, Yoshino says another Disney col-





laboration may be in the cards, remarking, "With enough demand, Jack may come to you for Halloweens to come!" Sounds good to us. ■

Published by Buena Vista Games, The Nightmare Before Christmas: Oogie's Revenge was released in October for PlayStation 2.

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Mis-Edventures in Gaming

Midway Games Unleashes Cartoon Network's Ed, Edd n Eddy on consoles. by Ryan Ball

delighted aving young Cartoon Network viewers with its wacky suburban adolescent high jinks since 1999, the animated series Ed, Edd n Eddy from creator/exec producer Danny Antonucci and his AKA Cartoons has made a game of terrorizing the neighborhood with Midway's

Ed, Edd n Eddy: The Mis-Edventures. We got in touch with the game's producer, Roger Faso, who discussed the finer points of making a successful game based on a popular toon property.

One thing that makes the series stand out among the ever-growing number of kid-targeted toons is its wacky character designs and overall art direction, which Faso says presented a number of challenges in translating it for its console debut. "The most difficult aspect for the product development team was figuring out how to replicate the boiling lines, the handdrawn animation style that is unique to the Ed, Edd n Eddy cartoon, within the game," he notes. "The characters, environments and game concept need to mirror the show so fans won't be disappointed."

Faso says Antonucci was involved with the development of the game every step of the way, making sure the title stayed true to his slapstick vision involving three hapless boys with the same name and a mutual obsession with get-rich-quick schemes. Series scribes Jono Howard and Mike Kubat also helped out by scripting the game's storyline and the original voice actors were called in to record new tracks.

In Ed, Edd n Eddy: The Mis-Edventures, gamers play as all three Eds, switching characters on the fly to take advan-



tage of each one's special abilities. There are also special all-Ed formations like the Trampol-Edd for collecting objects in high places, the Tower-of-Eddy for evading the locals, and Batter-Ed for busting through obstacles. All these come in handy as players make their way through the cul-de-sac, col-

lecting jawbreakers and scamming the other neighborhood kids. Fans of the show know that Ed is insane for chickens, so there is a chicken to catch in every level, many of which are inspired from actual episodes.

The game's cel-shaded 3D animation was created with Maya, while Flash was used for the 2D cinematics. "It's a challenge of all video games that are based on a 2D cartoon to get as close as possible the original look," Faso remarks. "No matter how close you get, it will still not look exactly like its 2D counterpart. So, we went with 2D cutscenes to get closer to what fans of the show are familiar with."

It's hard not to have fun while working with a property like Ed, Edd n Eddy. For Faso, the most enjoyable aspect of the development process was the preproduction phase. "During this time," he says, "you get to meet with the creators, writers and artists of the cartoon. It's interesting to see what their creative process is like. I think both industries have a lot to learn from each other. At the same time, there are a lot of similarities."

Through its partnership with Cartoon Network, Midway is also creating console, handheld and PC games based on the hit shows The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy and Dexter's Laboratory.









Ed, Edd n Eddy: The Mis-Edventures is rated "E" for Everyone and is available Oct. 15 for PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, GameBoy Advance and PC.

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Experience true-to-life swordplay and motion capture by one of Japan's leading swordfight composers.



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omething really big is going down—that is, if you can believe a little chicken: On November 4, two animation kings, director Mark Dindal and producer Randy Fullmer, who have been cooped up inside Disney Feature Animation for the past five and a half years, unleash their first film since the zany The Emperor's New Groove. Set in Oakey Oaks, a town populated entirely by wacky and impossibly cute school-age animals, Chicken Little nests a science fiction story inside the "sky is falling" fairy tale, but that only scratches the surface.

Chicken Little (voiced by actor Zach Braff) and his father (Garry Marshall) have issues. The film is set sometime after the young bespectacled bird sent the town into a panic with his "sky is falling" alarm only to realize an errant acorn had bopped him on the head. Now, everyone thinks he's crazy. He's embarrassed. His dad's

embarrassed. So, when a piece of the sky actually does land on his head, and his head alone, what does he do? And then, there's the problem of the furry aliens.

The film is Disney Feature Animation's first fully 3D theatrical release. started kicking around story lines eight months before Groove," says Fullmer, an 18-year Disney veteran. "Mark and I sort of assumed we'd do the film in 2D." But, by the time Groove was released, CGI features were catching the fancy of theatergoers, and Disney had released Dinosaur, a liveaction film with 3D characters. An internal 2D vs. 3D debate raged.

Fullmer tells a story about the late Joe Grant, a Disney legend who designed Snow White characters. "Grant," Fullmer relates, "said, 'Oh, shut up. You're arguing about the wrong things'. Walt would say, 'I want to tell great stories with great characters. That's our legacy. Find the toolset that can best tell a great story.' He would have jumped on 3D animation 20 years ago."

"So, a few months before Shrek came out, we decided to go CG," says Fullmer. "We went scampering around the building telling the people coming off Dinosaur, 'Stay here. We'll make Chicken Little a CG movie, but we have no idea what we're doing.' I think that appealed to everyone."

All told, 18 of the 36 animators who worked on Chicken Little had no CG experience. "I told animators if they didn't get with the new toolset, they would probably

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Fowl or Fair? Since Disney's Feature Animation division has put all its eggs in the CG basket, all eyes will be on how director Mark Dindal's Chicken Little will be performing at the box office this holiday season. The clever family feature centers on the unlikely bespectacled hero, his pals on the farm and some furry visitors from outer space. In addition to Zack Braff, who supplies the lead voice, the blueribbon cast includes Joan Cusack, Don Knotts, Patrick Stewart, Garry Marshall, Amy Sedaris, Harry Shearer, Adam West and Steve Zahn.



not have a job," says Fullmer. "The failure rate was zero."

Assuring that success was Aamon Butler who held a 3D boot camp, and a software team that created plugins and other proprietary code for Alias' Maya to make the transition easier. Butler and rigging head Ramiro Gomez designed a user interface which put a proxy character onscreen that looked like a flat little robot to simplify control selection. When an animator clicked on the robot's torso, for example, torso controls appeared on the 3D model. Because all the characters were bipeds and shared many controls, the robot worked for any character.

Further, the software team and riggers created a suite of tools that gave the 3D models 2D flexibility.

"We showed everyone Disney shorts

from the '40s and '50s," says Dindal. "They had a style I liked, round and loose. The Goofy shorts, the How To series, How to Play Football, How to Play Baseball." Dindal played sections of these films frame by frame to show how animators manipulated shapes to create emphasis and snap. "When you look at our frames a step at a time, you'll see the same manipulation in volumes as in the Goofy shorts and Looney Tunes stuff," he says.

Thus, the animation rig supported extreme squash and stretch, allowed animators to move isolated body parts and change the characters' shapes in other ways. "We removed all limits on the rig," says Steve Goldberg, visual effects supervisor. "Animators could get way, way off model; they could break the rig like crazy. We gave them the opportunity to pull the

shape off the skeleton."

For example, animators could remove an elbow to define an arm with a gentle curve. They could pull points on a curve to, perhaps, move the flesh on a character's face by using a suite of tools dubbed Chicken Wire or, with Chicken Clusters, could pull one point to move several control points on, for example, a cheek. They could grab a wrist and stretch the character's arm. As the animators posed characters, the skin stretched and shrank appropriately, providing an accurate silhouette.

"The resulting skin would stretch quite a bit," says Goldberg, "but we made sure that the texture material definitions held up." That was true even when characters were covered with feathers and fur. "We made sure we had enough density so the feathers wouldn't appear sparse," he says. Soft-

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ware for fur and feathers evolved from tools used for the lemurs in Dinosaur to accommodate a model change from NURBS to subdivision surfaces and, for the fur, to make it react to wind.

"This stuff was so over my head," laughs Dindal. "In the beginning, I kind of tried to throw in the jargon and be one of the gang, but they were light years beyond me. My job was to talk clearly about the emotion and what I wanted to see and go away and let them figure it out."

That was particularly true for the effects. To create shots of characters in cornfields, the crew used a combination of fully

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ILM Serves *Chicken* in 3D

hen Disney asked Industrial Light & Magic's Joel Aron to turn Chicken Little into a 3D movie, Aron knew ILM would need to do something that had never been done before.

As a result, if all goes as planned, moviegoers wearing feather-light keepsake glasses just like Chicken Little's can watch the inventive movie in stereo 3D like they've never seen before. It was a last minute decision at Disney, but it led to a state-of-theart solution, one that might help push people

off their couches and into theaters for this film and others: The sleightof-hand techniques developed by the wizards at ILM could be duplicated by any studio creating a digital film; the films could use the same equipment installed by RealD and Dolby in 100 select theaters and, if successful, perhaps more.

This is not Shark Boy and Lava Girl 3D. "Shark Boy was anaglyphic 3D," says Aron. "The glasses had red on the left and blue on the right. Your brain is robbed of the signals your eyes usually get and your eye muscles start

stressing. It's painful."

Chicken Little's 3D uses inexpensive passive polarized glasses and a 3D system from RealD that includes a special silver screen and prism that fits on a 2K projector.

"As the image comes out of the projector, the glass shifts slightly left and right and changes the polarity of the image 144 times a second," Aron explains. "Because the plastic glasses have one polarity in the left lens and another in the right, your left eye sees a left image and your right eye sees a right image. It's so fast you can't tell anything is different except you're looking into a 3D space."

Without the glasses, you would see separate left and right eye images onscreen at the same time. The trick in producing those two images was to do so without violating patents. "We couldn't do anything to alter the left eye," Aron says. "That had to remain untouched. And we couldn't create geometry."



So, Disney's work became the left-eye image and ILM used all of Disney's Maya, RenderMan and Shake files to make the right-eye image. "We took their Maya scene, the background and the characters, and projection mapped the left-eye image onto their geometry from their camera," he says. "Then, to make a righteye image, we duplicated that camera and moved it to the right 1.75 inches, the distance between your eyes."

In other words, they projected Disney's

image from the left eye onto the geometry, then rendered it from the right eye. Because the resulting image didn't fit precisely, ILM's Alan Trombla developed software that looked at images in the surrounding frames and projected pixels onto the geometry to compensate. "Alan built a node in [ILM's] Zeno that automatically copied the Maya scene, built a right eye and calculated the depth of a scene so when an artist opened up Zeno, all the layers were there," Aron says. Artists working in Shake with Disney files and ILM

> scripts composited the final shots with the dual images.

Those files were converted into a compressed clip in the QCC format, which knows about left and right images, and stored on a Dolby hard drive. The projector plays both images, the prism on the projector swaps polarity, and voila! Audience members wearing their Chicken Little glasses will see the left image with their left eye and the right image with their right eye and their brain will register the scene in 3D.

"Adding 3D to older movies would be hard because we might not be able to get all the files we need—the catch is the patent law," says Aron. "But, I think that creating a 3D version will become a standard for any future digital movies. All they need to do is throw a camera to do a right eye into the scene and render it. And, if they don't want to, we [ILM] will."

-Barbara Robertson

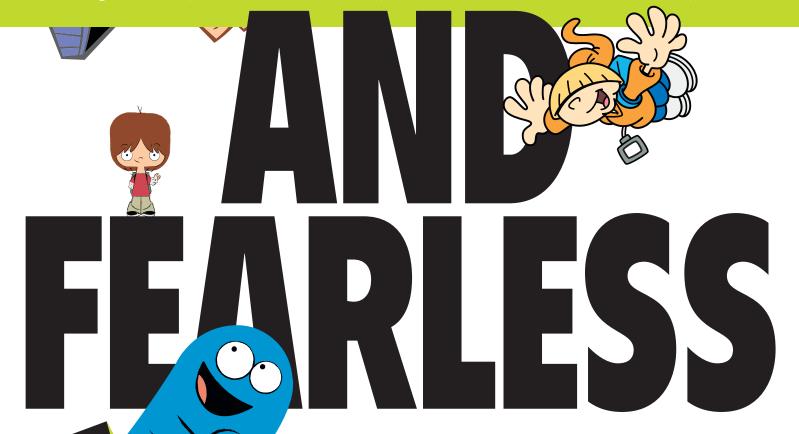
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it's a whole new cartoon network



new look, new shows and new oppportunities

CARTOON NETWORK





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Mark Dindal



Steven Goldberg



Randy Fullmer

rigged cornstalks, Maya Paint Effects cornstalks and Houdini particles.

To create liquids, artist Peter DeMund applied 2D techniques in the 3D world. DeMund, a former traditional effects artist, hand-sculpted droplets and shapes within splashes frame by frame using 3D meshes —creating shapes from subdivision surfaces one frame at a time. "They were rendered through RenderMan shaders with refraction built in," says Goldberg. "When the frames are played at speed, the motion is what you might get from a 2D drawing, but what you see is beautiful, believable 3D liquid shots. His colleagues with more experience in CG thought the technique was crazy, but it's not crazier than running a simulation over and over to get what feels right."

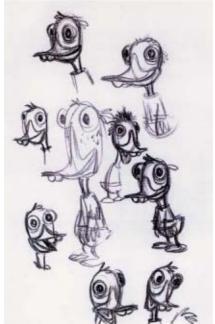
Ultimately, the crew also used Next Limit's RealFlow simulation software to create underlying motion for some shots, but DeMund controlled the look by augmenting waves with his hand-sculpted shapes.

New tools also helped give the animated film a live-action feel. "Terry Moews, the head of layout, had been a live-action cameraman," says Fullmer. "He visualized the entire movie from a live-action standpoint."

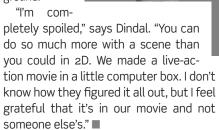
To make that easier, Moews worked with virtual camera rigs onscreen that represented real rigs—even hand-held cameras—but with some quirky advantages: dolly tracks that could assume any shape or length, and infinitely long boom arms. "The rigs allowed all the members of the layout team to work in a consistent fashion," says Goldberg, "and gave a believable feel to what was going on. Layout artists could click a proxy camera onscreen to activate parts of the camera rig.

Theatrical lighting reinforced the live action feel. "Mark really liked the idea of lighting leading the viewer's eye from shot to shot," says Goldberg. Using Disney's in-house Lumiere for lighting and Apple's Shake for







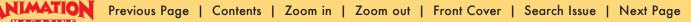






Disney's Chicken Little opens theaters on November 4.

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Reck out with us at Warner Bres. International TV booth #B1.00 at MIPCOM 2005. Get your backstage pass to live-action, cool fashions, rock star lifestyle, hip music... and all with an anime twist.













According to Baily, Classic Media's main

concern is finding that sweet spot between giving existing fans what they've come to expect from the animated favorites they've grown up with and adding modern twists for the new generation. Last year, for example, they animated platinum-selling pop group Destiny's Child in a music video for their cover of the title song from the 1964 Rankin & Bass TV spe-

cial Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. "Just by virtue of injecting some of the biggest recording artists of today into the world of Rudolph, it instantly now resonates in a contemporary way, and we haven't changed it one bit," Baily notes.

This year, the company has focused on putting some new magic into the storied hat that brought Frosty the Snowman to life back in 1969. And while a lot of property holders find it necessary to update classics with state-of-the-art 3D animation, Baily says he and his colleagues could virtually hear fans screaming, "Don't mess with my Frosty!" He comments, "Nothing in the world was going to convince us to change the way

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Snow Business

Classic Media keeps the heat on Frosty and other favorites. by Ryan Ball

aving built up a library of timeless properties from the likes of Harvey Ent., UPA, Jay Ward and Golden Books, Classic Media truly lives up to its name. But not content to rest on the lucrative laurels of its evergreen productions, the company is continuously expanding on those enduring franchises with all-new projects like the animated holiday home video release, The Legend of Frosty the Snowman.

"We are in the amazingly fortunate position of getting to work with these properties that tens of millions of people around the world have known and loved for 50, 60 years," says Evan Baily, head of production and creative affairs for Classic Media. "And, not to compare what we do to nuclear physics or anything, but it's kind of a responsibility because there are so many people who care so much about these things, and we

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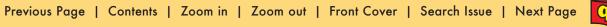












series follows the adventures of Mac and Bloo in a world where

wacky imaginary friends come to life!

Frosty

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Frosty looks one iota. Plus, we wanted to make something that had a timeless quality. Sticking something like instant messaging into the story is not something Frosty's world needed. So we wanted to be respectful, but at the same time go to a new place, as we always do."

With The Legend of Frosty the Snowman, Classic set out to tell a bigger story than the original 22-minute special. Animated by Studio B in Canada and Top Draw in the Philippines, the feature-length film retains the sweetness and light, comical touches of its predecessor, but adds more action and suspense, as well as multiple storylines involving its kid characters. Baily reveals that there's also a comic book that figures very significantly in the story and is designed exactly in the style of the original Rankin & Bass Frosty special. Filling in for Jimmy Durante as singing narrator this time around is actor Burt Reynolds. "Our goal is to make him into a top recording artist," says Baily. "He is absolutely terrific."

In the world of branded properties, Baily



feels there are too many people out to simply milk more money from cherished franchises. "We aim to be the opposite," he asserts. "We aim to add new creative layers, new elements and surprises and make these properties bigger and richer." He adds that much of their inspiration comes from some of the inspired work they see on television these days, commenting, "Even though we're working from these existing properties, what we make

needs to be as fresh and as exciting as that next creator-driven show-that next SpongeBob SquarePants, Fair-

ly OddParents or Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends—that breaks out on a kids' network."

The next enduring holiday favorite to get another chapter is Rankin & Bass's Here Comes Peter Cottontail. Slated for release on home video in the spring of 2006, the new feature finds Peter all grown up and serving as chief Easter Bunny. To teach his son about responsibility, he entrusts him with the key to the clock of spring, which falls into the wrong hands when Irontail and Jackie Frost return to town. Kapow Pictures in Sydney, Australia, is handling key creative functions while The Lab, also in Sydney, is completing CG animation that mimic's the original's stop-motion style. Adding to the fun is a voice cast that includes Christopher Lloyd, Roger Moore, Molly Shannon, Keenan Thompson and Tom Kenny.

Classic Media is also in production on the new animated TV series, Gerald McBoing-Boing. Based on the 1950 Oscar-wining UPA short written by Theodore "Dr. Seuss" Geisel and directed by Robert Cannon, the show now airs during Cartoon Network's Tickle U preschool block. Also look for a new music video featuring a computer-animated Mariah Carey performing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," and a 2D-animated George of the Jungle series, which is pre-sold in a number of territories around the world and is going into production at Studio B. According to Baily, all these new productions represent only the first wave of exciting things coming down the pipeline, or Bunny Trail, as the case may be.

Find out more about the company at www.classicmedia.tv.

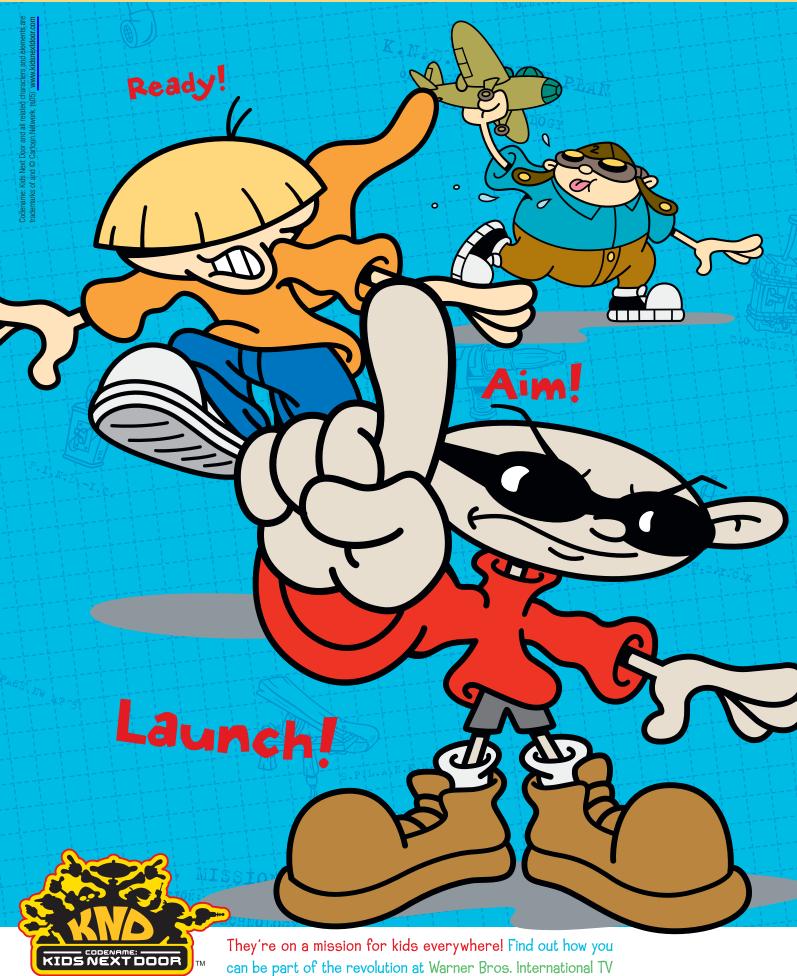




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booth #B1.00 at MIPCOM 2005.

The Samurai Critic:

Your Guide to current Anime Releases on DVD



by Charles Solomon

Cowboy Bebop Remix One [Bandai, \$29.98]

With its rough and tumble action sequences, flashy effects, jazz track and alienated hero, director Shinichiro Watanabe's 1998 Cowboy Bebop series redefined cool in animation. Bounty hunter and space cowboy Spike Spiegel is an updated version of a film noir detective: understated, deadly and sar-

donic, he carries the scars of his checkered past on his body and in his heart. Bandai's first Remix disc comes loaded with extras, including English and Japa-

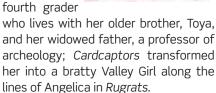


nese tracks in both stereo and Dolby Digital 5.1, a commentary by Japanese actors Kôichi Yamadera and Unshô Ishizuka, the original voices of Spike and Jet, plus a commentary and interview with Wendee Lee, the English voice of Faye. The new material will entertain the many fans of the series, but the question remains, when will Watanabe create new adventures for Spike, Jet, Faye, Ed and Eine? One 26-episode TV season and one feature (released in Japan in 2001 and the U.S. in 2003) clearly aren't enough.

Cardcaptor Sakura: Clow Book Set [Geneon, \$99.98, 9 discs]

Die-hard anime fans excoriated The Kids' WB when it transformed the popular series *Cardcaptor Sakura* into the Americanized *Cardcaptors*, which ran from 2000 through 2002. The nine-disc *Clow Book Set*, which encompasses

the first season (episodes o n e - 3 5) , proves that viewers were right to prefer the original. Sakura Kinomoto is a cheerful fourth grader



CLOW BOOK

When Sakura opens a mysterious book in her father's study, strange lights fly out and disappear. Kero, who looks like a plush version of the winged cat on the book's cover, awakens and explains that she's released the magical cards of the great sorcerer Clow Reed. To correct her mistake, Sakura must become a Cardcaptor and retrieve the Clow Cards before they work mischief on the world.

Sakura begins as an unsure, appealing adolescent who discovers untapped reserves of courage and resourcefulness through her adventures. In episode 31, "Sakura and the Nameless Book," she uses the Big card to defeat a dragon the Create card conjured something the more insecure Sakura of the first episodes wouldn't have attempted. (She also imagines using the card to trample her brother when he teases her.) One of the most charming girls' series of recent years, Cardcaptor Sakura is available only in Japanese with English subtitles. Although the target audience is adolescent girls, the series has won a strong following among adults as well.

Last Exile Complete Box Set [Geneon: \$149.98, 7 discs]

The sepia-toned fantasy series *Last Exile* (2003) boasts striking designs and well-choreographed air battles. Designer Mahiro Maeda's muted look combines elements of *Buck Rogers* comic strips, Weimar Germany and Napoleonic France. Childhood friends Claus and Lavie hope to follow in their fathers' footsteps by becoming a top Vanship team: dashing mail couriers who fly their tiny craft on dangerous missions. Just as the movement of a pawn may decide a chess game, Claus' and Lavie's decision to aid a disabled

ship alters the complex political



struggle for the future of their planet. Rescuing the mysteriously powerful girl, Al, forces the duo to face three deadly perils: the Exile, a gargantuan flying fortress; the vast storm system known

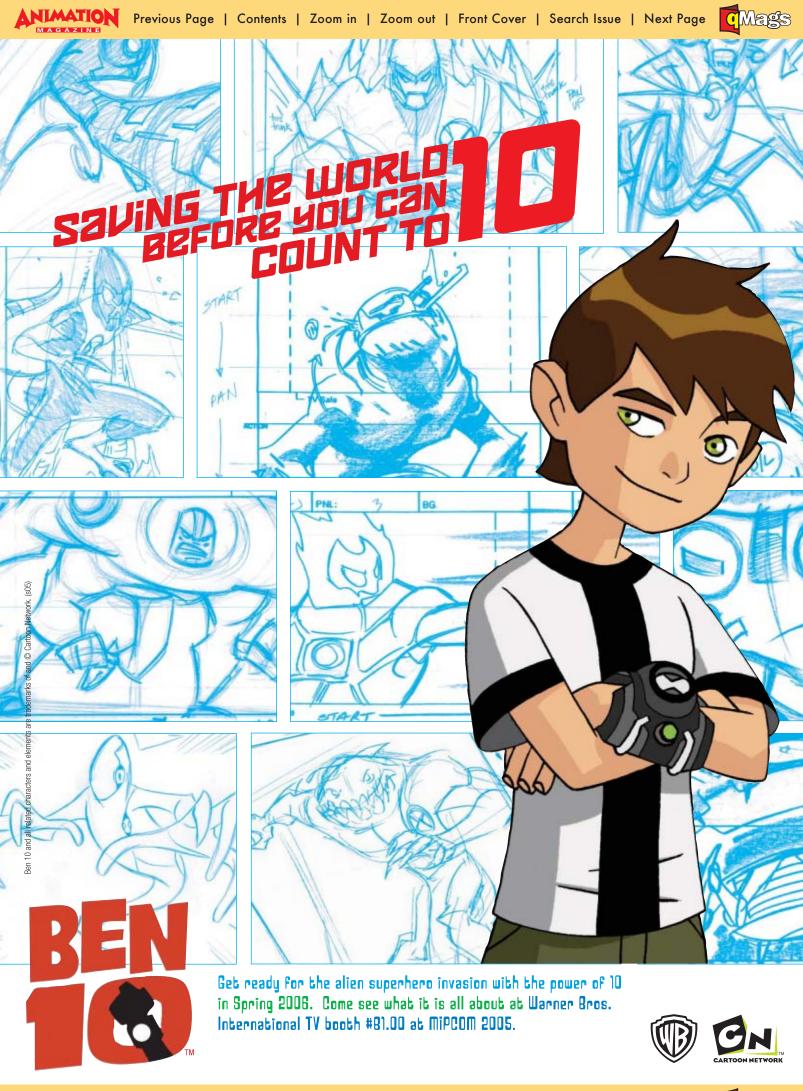
as the Grand Stream; and the power-mad Maestro Delphine.

These conflicts climax in an extended battle that provides director Kouichi Chigira a showcase for his skill at staging aerial dogfights. The small, agile Vanships of Claus and his fellow pilots elude the counterattacks of the Exile, as the X-Wing Fighters of Luke Skywalker and the Rebel Alliance outmaneuvered the weapons of the Death Star. Like the first Star Wars movie, Last Exile ends with the freedom fighters triumphant, but the characters learn that victory may require bitter sacrifices. The 26-part series begins slowly but builds into an original and rewarding adventure.

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Early Fall Collection

The nights are getting longer and colder. Thank God for these three awesome animated DVDs that will keep us warm until that darn groundhog spots his shadow again! by Ramin Zahed

Tom and Jerry Spotlight Collection, Vol. 1 and 2 (Warner Bros., 2 Discs per Volume, \$26 per Vol.)

Ever since Bill Hanna and Joseph Barbera introduced the world to their mischievous cat-andmouse team in 1940, Tom and Jerry have influenced numerous animators and writers. Thanks to the good folks at Warner Bros., we now have two glorious volumes of their hilarious shorts available for our daily viewing pleasure. (And, yes, anyone on your holiday gift list should be grateful if you buy them a set!)

The first volume offers 40 restored,

remastered shorts from the MGM era, starting off with the Oscar-nominated 1943 short, Yankee Doodle Mouse. The

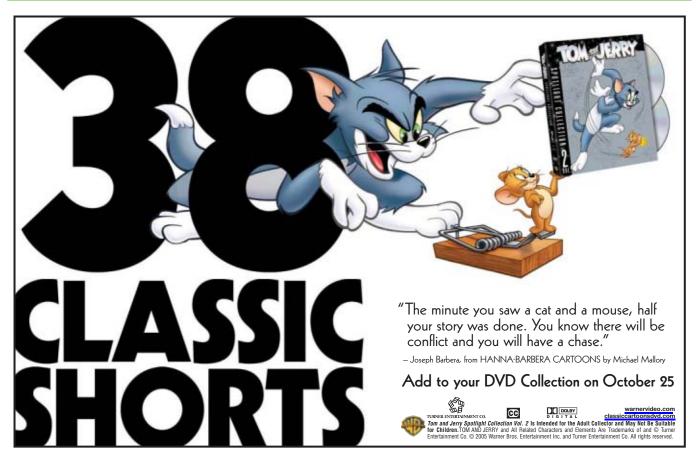
> 1956 widescreen Blue Cat Blues ends this collection. Also included are Tom and Jerry in the Hollywood Bowl, that famous Gene Kelly/Jerry pairing from the movie Anchors Aweigh, and the documentary, How Bill and Joe Met Tom and Jerry. (It should be noted that some critics and collectors are still fuming that the DVD features the edited, politically correct versions of some of the shorts!)

Volume Two, which comes

out on October 25, features 40 more gems from the duo's Golden Age, including their debut Puss Gets the Boot (Tom was called Jasper back then!). Production sketches, a featurette called Animators as Actors and an intro by Whoopi Goldberg are all included in this volume. They sure gave playing cat and mouse a good name, didn't they?

Cinderella: Platinum Edition (Disney, 2 Discs, \$29.99)

Disney's "Princess" movies have a way of casting spells on girls of a certain age all over the world, and the studio's 1950 Cinderella masterpiece is right up there with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs on the popularity list. How lucky for today's home audiences that we now have a pristine version of Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske and Clyde Geronimi's seminal classic on DVD. Yes, Cinderella's mouse pals Jaq and Gus are here, as are the evil cat Lucifer, the peppy Fairy Godmother and the nasty stepmother and stepsisters. The timeless songs "A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart



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Makes" and "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" haven't lost any of their original magic and transthe formation scenes can

still take your breath away.

The full-screen format, 1.33 aspect ratio and 5.1 sound would be reason enough to add this to the home library, but there are a lot of extras as well. Among the cool bells and whistles: a documentary featurette about the making of the film, deleted scenes, a 1922 Cinderella Laugh-o-gram, reconstructed deleted song ("The Cinderella Work Song" and "Dancing on a Cloud"), a tribute to Disney's Nine Old Men, a look at the art of Mary Blair, storyboard to film comparison, slideshow galleries and a sneak peek at the upcoming DVD princess than great looks, a pleasant singing voice and an amazing knack for making friends with rodents.

Happy Tree Friends: Overkill (Mondo Media, 3 Discs, \$34.99)

Watching Mondo Media's delightfully

deranged Happy Tree Friends series is the equivalent of eating a pint of Ben and Jerry's Chunky Monkey icecream. You just know it's going to damage your health in some way, but you keep wanting more. Kenn Navarro and Rhode

Montijo's twisted world features cute and cuddly animals like Cuddles the Rabbit, Toothy the Beaver and Petunia the Skunk, but their adventures are terribly violent and pain-inducing.

The colorful Flash-animated seg-

and they've also found fans on MTV worldwide as well as Comcast's G4 channel. This super-duper holiday box set includes the first three Happy Tree Friends DVDs as well as 19 minutes of new bonus episodes, including the Ottawa Festival Award-winning Mole in the City and the Comic-Con favorite, A

to Zoo. Of course, who would want to miss Remains to be Seen (where Flippy and the gang are zombies) or Suck It Up (where we witness a classic battle with Sniffles and the ants). We have

to agree with Mondo Media CEO John Evershed when he says, "There is no reason for anyone to leave their house for hours and hours of pure pleasure and torture!" For maximum damage, we recommend a complete ice-cream binge to accompany the viewing expe-



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DOLBY





Bigger Pie, Smaller Slices

Top indie players discuss the changing climate of producing TV animation for the global market. by Chris Grove

kay. So here's the deal. You're an independent producer of children's animation. You get a great idea. You find some co-production partners who are enthralled. They hop on board faster than a Pittsburgh retiree racing to catch a train for a free January vacation in Boca Raton. Except the producers have a lot more money in their pockets. In short order, you produce thirty 22-minute episodes, haul them off to the big international marketplaces and sell the show into 8o-plus territories with a great shot at adding the U.S. later. And ... you break even?

That, at least, is one measure of the state of the kids' animation market in 2005. "There are more platforms than ever," says Geoff Watson, general manager and company director of Yoram Gross Film Studios from his vantage point in Australia. "The problem is the pie's getting bigger, but the slices are getting smaller."

Consider this: A decade ago you could easily get a \$200,000 license fee in the U.S. for a 22-minute episode of a top show. Now you're lucky if you get \$30,000. That's some serious deflation. That's why, say a number of companies contacted for this article, when you think of an idea you better be thinking of something that has some licensing and other strong ancillary marketing opportunities down the line. "Some broadcasters kind of act like you should be paying them for the exposure," gripes an exec with a major North American studio. "They figure that they're a great platform for all the toys, games and clothes you can sell."

Nonetheless, four years after the implosion of the animation economy in Germany, Latin America and Asia, the general consensus is that the state of the economy for producers is better than it has been in a good long while. "Despite the fact that there's still a lot of product out there, the market has a lot of buoyancy right now," says Jonathan Wiseman, director of sales and marketing of Ottawa, Canada-based Amberwood Entertainment. other things, Amberwood is just starting production on the third season of The Secret world of Benjamin Bear. "In terms of what we're currently generating in sales and the overall outcomes of our deals I have very high expectations of moving forward." Amberwood recently announced a development deal with Canadian cabler YTV for the boys' six-11 3D action series RollBots.

Not everyone, however, is so sanguine about the animation market's overall health. "There's still a concerted effort on the part of broadcasters [worldwide] to reduce purchasing budgets," says Barry Ward, president and founder of Vancouverbased Bardel Entertainment, Inc. "It remains a market in which it's difficult to make money."

Bardel has two core businesses—acting as a full-service production company for clients such as DreamWorks SKG, Warner Bros. and Nelvana on the one hand, and developing, producing and distributing its own proprietary content on the other. Among other projects, Bardel has produced 39 episodes of Silverwing for TELETOON Canada.

"I'm approaching this year with the knowledge that broadcasters need to refresh their schedules," says Sam Ewing, Cookie Jar Entertainment senior vice president of sales and distribution, from his office in Paris. But, he adds, sellers need to do their research on every territory

and every platform. "They have money to spend, but they're going to do it wisely."

Five years ago a lot of international buyers got stuck with a significant amount of product because local economies went south. Only recently have they dug themselves out of a hole. "It's a much more re-



Barry Ward. Bardel



Sam Ewing, Cookie Jar



Rick Mischel, Mainframe



Geoff Watson, Yoram Gross



Jonathan Wiseman, Amberwood



Kevin Gillis, Breakthrough

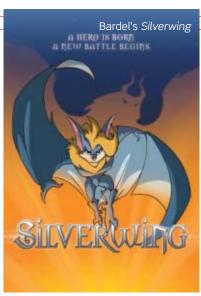
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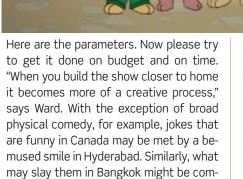


Amberwood's The Secret World of Benjamin Bear

sion too quickly." The market for kids' series in most age groups and genres is in good shape, with the exception of the overseas preschool niche that almost all agree is saturated. "The new buzz phrase is 'co-viewing'," says Ward. Just as it seems everyone was looking for empowered girls' strips after the success of Totally Spies! and The Powerpuff Girls now broadcasters, both state run and publicly owned, are looking for the next SpongeBob SquarePants, a show that children and their parents can watch (co-view) together, a show where one can advertise cereal and beauty products in the same half-hour. (A consummation devoutly to be wished for.)

Among some of the more significant trends in 2005, the repatriation of animation work back from Asia and India to Canada, Australia and, in some cases, the United States continues apace. Lower-cost Flash animation is part of the reason. But Flash's efficiencies don't explain why a significant percentage of shows produced in the West are done so in the more costly mediums of traditional cel animation, 2D and 3D CGI. Though some say the cost-savings of Flash are over emphasized, what's clear is that the production treaties between Canada and many E.U. countries plus the continuing presence of tax credits and subsidies is keeping a lot of work in the Western hemisphere that might otherwise have ended up in Manila or Bombay.

"While 2D is amenable to outsourcing, CGI isn't," says Mischel. Outsourcing tends to transform the animation process into a manufacturing one. Here are the plans.



At least two sub-genres of the kids' market offer the greatest opportunities. Despite the plethora of the aforementioned girl-power strips, girls 6-11 are still underserved says Kevin Gillis, exec producer of Toronto-based Breakthrough Films & Television. "The challenge for content providers," says Gillis, "is that broadcasters are looking to reach out to both girls and boys without alienating either." That's why, for example, Breakthrough made sure that the girl hero of Atomic Betty had two

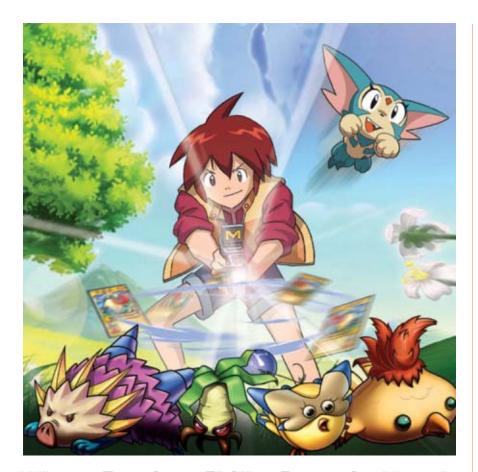
pletely misunderstood in Boston.

strong boy sidekicks/collaborators. And as for the optimal mix of subject matter and themes? Too much relationship stuff and that sound you hear are the boys leaving the room to grab their Play-Stations. Too much action and the girls are going to start raising their collective eyebrows in disgust.

One thing that almost everyone agrees on is that for small independent companies, it's a brutal world. "Broadcasters used to be much more open to untried, newer companies," says Tanya Kelen, Breakthrough's distribution chief. Now they want to deal mainly with the big guys with proven track records. Which is what you'd expect from vertically integrated media companies that are answerable to their shareholders and, by definition, risk-averse. "I'm amazed that anyone in the United States [where there are no subsidies and tax breaks] can get a deal done," says Ewing. ■



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When Gaming Skills Come in Handy

Sunwoo's Mix Master bridges gaming and kids' worlds.

his year at the MIPCOM market, Sunwoo Entertainmant will offer international TV buyers a taste of its new 39x22 series titled Mix Master. We talked to Jae Moh, the president of Sunwoo Entertainment USA to get an idea of what to expect from this colorful show which targets kids, age 7-12:

Tell us a little bit about the development history of the show.



Jae Moh

Jae Moh: Sunwoo began working on the show in 2003. Mix Master originated as an online roleplaying game. We licensed the rights to create an animated series for television.

How does the visual style of the show reflect the storyline which mixes the gaming world and the traditional animation universe?

Jae Moh: The show is 2D with 3D elements. The storyline follows a group of kids who, when they're not at school or doing homework and chores, love to play the monster-mixing game. When the game world enters the real world, the kids use the skills (or lack thereof) they've already developed as game-players to fend off their foes. The premise of the show calls for character and monster designs to crossover into both media, so the monsters that kids use in their reallife playing cards actually participate in storylines throughout the course of the show.

What were some of the challenges in creating this dynamic new show?

Jae Moh: The biggest challenge was to create a show that would have international appeal, attracting kids who as yet have not heard of the game and at the same time, not lose our base of game players in Korea, Japan and China. We resolved the issue by creating a writing team made up of both Japanese and American talent.

In your opinion, what makes Mix Master stand apart from other similar shows aiming for the same target audience?

Jae Moh: Though the show was inspired by a game, it emphasizes plot and good stories above all else; and it has a group of characters with which kids will identify and can root for. Our stories are full of humor and action and are not just reenactments of game play.

How do you feel about the TV animation climate today? How does it compare with what was happening, say 10 years ago?

Jae Moh: I am more optimistic today than I was 10 years ago. 10 years ago vertical integration was eating up all of the potential distribution platforms. Today it seems that a new kids channel is springing up in a new territory on a regular basis. Also the revenue models have changed in favor of international distribution.

Do you have any plans for presenting the characters in multiple digital platforms?

Jae Moh: Of course, we are already available online, as playing cards and now a TV show. We intend to develop into all of the many digital platforms including game consoles, mobile and computer as well.

Sunwoo Entertainment will be attending the MIPCOM market in France in October. You can reach them at Booth 8.30 at the Palais de Festival in Cannes.

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MEET US AT MIPCOM STAND 00.01





Miss BG

(52 x 30')

ANIMATION/KIDS

Adapted from the famous books in France, Miss BG is a precocious eight year-old girl (going on twenty!) who sees it as her mission to teach her young brother George the ways of the world. A Canada/France co-production with Breakthrough Animation, Ellipsanime, Def2Shoot, TVO/TFO and France 5.



Captain Flamingo

(26 x 30')

ANIMATION/KIDS

Tired of being overlooked by big kids, tiny Milo Howell dons his terrycloth cape as Captain Flamingo and saves the day for little kids everywhere. A co-production with Breakthrough Animation, Heroic Film Company, Atomic Cartoons, and PASI Animation. Produced in Association with YTV Canada.



Atomic Betty: NO-L-9

(1 x 60')

ANIMATION/CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

A long-forgotten mythical constellation (The No-L-9) has suddenly come back to life. The planets actually sing! Maximus is intent on shrinking them and making them ornaments for his Christmas tree. Atomic Betty discovers a long-lost castaway who helps save the singing planets and brings a special holiday surprise to someone back on Earth. Co-produced by Breakthrough Animation and Atomic Cartoons.



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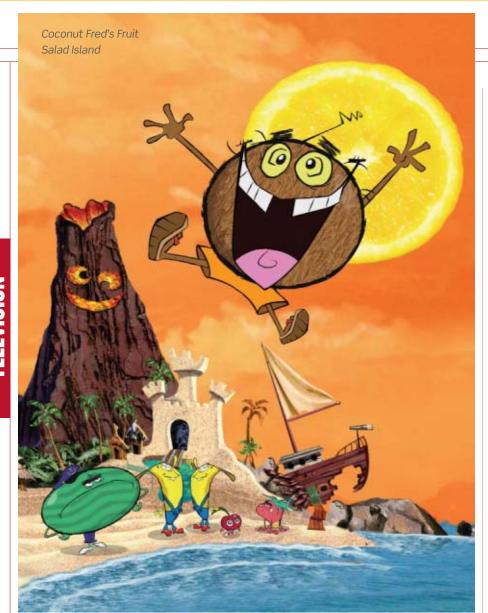
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Fresh Blasts of Color

Coconut Fred's Fruit Salad Island and Johnny Test make a big splash on Kids' WB!'s new lineup. by Ramin Zahed

t's a well-known fact that the noisier, problem kids get all the attention in most families. The same is true for Loonatics Unleashed, the futuristic new show inspired by classic Looney Tunes characters which premiered last month on Kids' WB! While the popular press paid a lot of attention to the series, two other dynamite toons-Coconut Fred's Fruit Salad Island and Johnny Testalso premiered on the network last month. We hope to tip the scale by spotlighting them a few weeks after their big season debuts.

"We're very fortunate here at Warner

Bros. Animation to be able to work on a wide variety of animated shows," says Sander Schwartz, president of Warner Bros. Animation and the series' exec producer. "From hard-biting action adventure shows to slapstick comedy to preschool fare, we have a great portfolio, and we're very proud of our lineup this season."

A clear testament to the diversity of the new shows on the channel this year is Coconut Fred's Fruit Salad Island, a wild and peppy show featuring an optimistic coconut (voiced by the brilliant and omnipresent Rob Paulsen) and a colorful bunch of tropical fruit sidekicks with catchy names like Slip D'Peel and Slide D'Peel, Bingo Cherry, Bunga Berry and Lemon Wedge!

Created by Don Oriolo and Sammy Oriti, the series displays a very distinctive visual style, which sets the 2D Flash animated characters against an eyepopping collage of photorealistic backgrounds.

"We think Coconut Fred is that rare irreverent comedy with very strong possibilities to capture the same audience as Kim Christianson The Fairly OddParents and SpongeBob SquarePants," says Schwartz. "Seriously, there hasn't been one person who hasn't smiled after they heard the show description alone!"

One of the key people responsible for the dynamic look of the series is Christopher producer Aaron Simpson, Keenan



Sander Schwartz

who also worked as production manager on the network's Xiaolin Showdown. "Flash allowed our team to add a lot of textures and intricate expression to the characters," says Simpson. "You take a look at Fred and he looks crazed. He has lots of energy and knows how to pull it all together. As far as the island is concerned, we wanted to give it colors that really popped. It was as if we took a page out of a travel brochure and pushed everything one step further. We use a myriad of colors and textures—there are multiple planes of real textures layered on top of each other—so you feel like you can smell the water and feel the breeze!"

Simpson believes that Macromedias' Flash software was key in delivering the look of the show. "The limitations only had to do with how much we could stuff inside the system," he says. "We were really pushing the software, and it was beginning to buckle under the pressure at times. I mean you can animate Fantasia in Flash, but why would you?" The toon team also used Photoshop for the background design and Adobe Illustrator to

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Of course, comparisons with a certain idealistic yellow sponge who lives in a pineapple under the sea are inevitable. "They are fair comparisons," admits Keenan. "Yes, they are both high-energy animated series set in exotic locations, but we think the tone of both Fred and the series itself is different from SpongeBob! We think

the show will stand on its own."

one to have a good time!"

Also standing on its own and holding his head way up high this season is Johnny Test, another hyperactive show created by Scott Fellows, a writer on Disney's Doug and Nick's The Fairly OddParents. This one centers on a fearless 11-year-old kid named Johnny and his genetically enhanced mutt, Dukey. In each episode, Johnny and his talking pooch act as willing guinea pigs for his twin sisters, Susan and Mary, who have a knack for inventing cool gadgets such as time machines and supersonic scooters.

"The show was first pitched to us as just a concept, with no artwork," says the show's creative executive Kim Christianson. "We loved the overall idea, but in the original pitch, Johnny was a little younger, and he was a bit of a victim. We made him older and in charge of his own demise! We tweaked it so he would be more of a superhero: He could breathe underwater and hang with the ocean creatures, or have fire farts-you know, things that young boys would like to emulate!"

If the look of the show is reminiscent of familiar toons such as The Powerpuff Girls or Dexter's Laboratory, it's because the series producer is the talented Chris Savino, who also worked on those shows. Although the pilot was originally made in Flash, the execs were looking for a more traditional, handdrawn approach, and that's where Savino came in. "Chris really refined that specific look, and we loved it," says Christianson.

"The show's appeal really starts with the writing," notes Savino. "It's both smart and funny, appeals to both boys and girls and the scripts are so well written that you can actually read them as radio pieces!"

Despite a very tight production schedule which had a six-month turnaround time, the show sports a very cool, hyper-retro feel, thanks to Savino and art director Paul Stec's clean eye for design. "The backgrounds are digitally colored, but they're styled in a way

to emulate an actual painted background. Digital color tends to become consistent so you throw in texture and different lighting elements as well."

Because the look and characters on the show have an instant recognition factor, the Johnny Test team didn't have to waste any time second-guessing each other. "We were under a very tight schedule, but we actually got to enjoy the process of creating this world," says Savino. "We started production in February, and here we are in September delivering the first half hour of the show. We

spend a lot of long hours, but the team has a real passion for the show. The relationship between Johnny and Dukey, especially, really strikes a chord."

In fact, Savino doesn't shy away from comparing this latest boy-and-his-amazing-pet team to other great duos such as Ted Key/ Jay Ward's Sherman and Peabody or Bill Watterson's comic strip icons Calvin and Hobbes.

In the long run, however, it's up to the viewers to discover these new additions to the Warner Bros. family. As Sander Schwartz muses, "Win, lose or draw, we're very proud of the efforts of our teams and the shows that we have as the result of their efforts." Taking a cue from Coconut Fred, he optimistically adds, "We believe they're standout

The New Kids' WB! **Saturday Morning Lineup**

Yu-Gi-Oh! Grand 8 00 Championship The Batman 8:30

Xiaolin Showdown 9:00

Coconut Fred's Fruit Salad Island 9:30

Pokémon: Advanced Battle 10:00 **Loonatics Unleashed** 10:30

11:00 **Johnny Test**

Yu-Gi-Oh! Grand Championship 11:30

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Captain Scarlet Rides Again

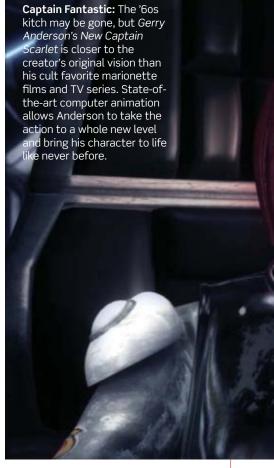
Gerry Anderson updates his classic "Supermarionation" series for the CG age. by Ryan Ball

ith the box-office and homevideo success of Matt Stone's and Trey Parker's Thunderbirds-inspired Team America: World Police, it would seem like the perfect time for a revival of one of Gerry Anderson's classic puppet properties. But don't expect to see any wooden performances in the all-new Captain Scarlet. The only strings Anderson's interested in pulling these days are strings of code that bring his time-honored characters to life through state-of-the-art digital animation.

And don't for a minute think that Anderson is selling out by jumping on the CG bandwagon. He tells us he's always been interested in using the best tools available to tell his stories. "I made a whole heap of puppet films years ago and every time we made a new film, I introduced new techniques and some inventions because I was really trying to make the puppet film look as close to live action as possible," he says. "Live action was really what I wanted to do. I fell into making puppet films and I couldn't get out of it."

Anderson recalls how problematic the "Supermarionation" process was. The rigid faces were incapable of expression, the puppeteers could never get the characters to walk convincingly, and the hands were sculpted and couldn't pick things up, hence the inserts of real human hands dialing phones and entering secret codes on number pads. And while fans of the old shows count these things among their many charms, Anderson cringes at the sight of them. He eventually abandoned the style of filmmaking and began directing commercials with CG during the early years of computer animation.

"Suddenly, I realized that we could remake those films and do everything that we couldn't do when we made them in the first place." Anderson recalls. "If we



used CG, we could make the characters look real."

Characters in Gerry Anderson's New Captain Scarlet are animated primarily through motion capture, which many would say is little more than a new form of puppetry. But Anderson sees it as something completely different. He explains, "When I look at the films in our theater here at Pinewood on the big screen (we're making the shows in highdefinition and giving them a Dolby 5.1 soundtrack), I don't see animation at all. I'm just looking at reality."

For the initial three installments, the motion-capture work was outsourced, but Anderson and his Indestructible Production Company decided to invest in a 16-camera VICON MX 40 setup and built their own in-house studio, overseen by mo-cap supervisor Graham Hudson. "It saved us an absolute fortune buying the kit and doing it ourselves," Hudson says. "And the directors are there as well.

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One of the biggest luxuries of having it in-house is re-shoots, which we just couldn't do with the first few episodes."

Hudson's crew of four has managed to deliver a ton of mo-cap data in a short period of time, and he says the top-of-the-line VICON cameras were a big help. "The quality of the data is so clean that it just reduced our clean-up time massively. The MX2s that we used before were great, but they're just not a patch on these MX4os. It's a DVD-VHS comparison."

Everything about the new Captain Scarlet may be considerably more hightech than its late 1960s counterpart, but Anderson insists it was very important for him and his team to stay true to the characters that fans remember so fondly. "The people who first saw *Scarlet* were probably eight years old at the time," he notes. "Now the eight-year-olds are adults and they have children of their own, and so we're able to attract

a family audience because mothers and fathers are taking a trip down memory lane and they're introducing and recommending the show to their kiddies."

While the characters, for the most part, have been modeled to resemble the fiberglass puppets from the original series, Anderson notes that one character has undergone a sex change. To give women better representation in the series, Lieutenant Green is now of the female persuasion. Hey, it seems to have worked for Starbuck on the SCI-FI channel's redo of *Battlestar Galactica*.

Cool vehicles have always been at the center of Gerry Anderson productions, the kind of jet-powered, gadget-loaded crime-fighting machines that every boy fantasizes about taking for a spin. Little has changed with the new series, except for some major overhauls. "What looked good in 1968 doesn't look good today," Anderson remarks, adding that his new space-aged flying machines are

truly a sight to behold.

"I'm not a Gerry Anderson fan," Anderson admits, explaining, "I love whatever I'm working on at the time, but two weeks later, that's worn thin and I'm now concentrating on doing it even better in the next episode. So I tend not to look back." Looking forward, the auteur has set his sights again on the big screen, perhaps giving Thunderbirds a proper revival. Anderson had nothing to do with the 2004 live-action flop based on his series. "Universal pictures offered me three quarters of a million dollars to say how good the picture was, and I turned it down," he reveals. "You're talking to an honest but very poor man."

We have a feeling Anderson's financial situation will change soon enough as kids all over the world discover *Gerry Anderson's New Captain Scarlet*. The show began airing on ITV in the U.K. last year and is coming to the U.S. sometime this year. ■

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The Toons Are Back in Town

Your Guide to Some of the Best Shows at MIPCOM 2005

orget about carving pumpkins and shopping for cold weather accessories. If you're in the children's TV business, the month of October means taking your market skills and killer toons to the popular MIPCOM event in Cannes, where over 10,000 players and 1,000 mobile professionals will be singing the praise of their latest products to buyers Oct. 17-21. We wish we had the space to write about every one of these promising new projects. For now, we'll just have to stick to highlighting some of them in this issue! (To get more info, please visit www.mipcom.com.)

Laptop Games

Everybody is talking about taking their animated content to the next digital platform, but the folks at Neptuno Films are actually doing a show about a kid and his father playing with a laptop! In the second season of Danny & Daddy Duet, young viewers are asked to play along with the main character as he sets up a riddle with his father. The 104x3 package has already been secured



in various territories including Disney Asia, Cartoon Network Japan, Animania HD in the U.S., Minimax in Hungary, Canal J in France, and RTP in Portugal. In addition, a range of merchandising deals for the popular duo are in negotiations with partners. "The new series comes on the heels of the outstanding response we had to the first season," says Josep Viciana, president and creative director of Neptuno Films. "Danny and his daddy will continue to entertain and stimulate kids' imaginations."

From Book to Screen



"Things couldn't be better." That's the catchphrase associated with Ebb and Flo, the delightful 2D preschool series from U.K.'s **VGI Entertainment**, and you can say the same thing about the performance of the show all over the world. Based on the series of popular children's books by Jane Simmons, the series follows the adventures of a spunky five-year-old girl and her sensitive pooch. To date, the hotto-trot show has been licensed in over 45 territories, including U.S. (Noggin), Canada (CBC and Telequebec), Japan (Disney), Australia (ABC), Germany (KIKA) and France (Canal J). After premiering on Five's Milkshake in the U.K. last April, Five has expressed interest in a second series of 26 episodes, bringing the total number to 52. It's all proof that you don't need crazy robots and post-apocalyptic creatures to win hearts and viewers all over the world. Sometimes, a great concept and beautiful animation is all you can ask for!



Space Cowboys and Indians

It looks like Dargaud Distribution is going to have a great harvest season at MIPCOM. The sales arm of French producers Dargaud-Marina, Ellipseanime, Storeimages and Dupuis will be taking a killer slate of new animated shows to the market. First up is Yakari, a 52x13 show for France 3, targeting four to eight-year-old audiences. This charming offering centers on a little Indian bov (Yakari) who is able to understand the language of animals thanks to a protective totem known as Big Eagle. He is joined in his adventures by his horse Little Thunder and his best friend Rainbow. Overall, it's a great way to re-introduce the little ones to the world of animals and native American's special relationship with nature and wildlife.

The French distributor is also bringing Valerian & Laure*line*, the new show directed by Philippe Vidal, and produced by acclaimed filmmakers Luc Besson, Robert Rea, Emmanuel Prevost and Sat Michiaki to the mart. Aimed at a slightly older audience, this 40x26 fantasy adventure is about a 25th century space explorer who meets a young heroine from the Middle Ages—time travel is a common pastime in the future!—and together, they try to save the world from the evil aliens known as Vlagos in a hostile galaxy far, far away. Keep up the great work, Dargaud!

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Space:



The creative group at Parisbased Marathon Entertainment is back in action this fall with a hot new show about a band of misfit space cadets. The company already has two huge global hits under its belt (Totally Spies! and Martin Mystery) and is launching the 52x30 Team Galaxy at the market this year.



"Team Galaxy is an ambitious blend of 2D and CG animation," says David Michel, the show's creator and Marathon's VP. "The series mixes comedy and action in the same way Totally Spies! does. We are also bringing the fourth season of Totally Spies! and the third season of Martin Mystery to MIPCOM."

Michel says it's definitely a crowded market for indie producers. "Having a show picked up in the North American market has become very challenging," he adds. "However, it still seems that if buyers 'fall in love' with a TV show from an independent producer, they'll find a way to acquire it eventually."

As far as trends go, Michel says CGI shows tend to skew to a preschool audience, but there's definitely a clear drift toward the six-11 arena. "The challenge is to put together budgets that are high enough to match the quality of TV shows such as Jimmy Neutron."

And besides his own shows, Michel names two other things that continue to put a smile on his face—Cartoon Network's Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends and Nickelodeon's The Fairly OddParents.

Meet One More Space Traveler

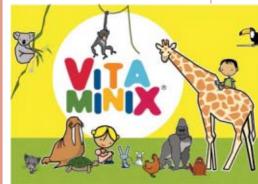


Spain's hot up-and-coming animation producer Lion Toons will have a strong presence in Cannes this year with two cutting-edge properties. Penned by Barbara Slade, Cosme the Astronaut targets kids, six to 11, and centers on a seven-year-old boy who dreams of becoming an astronaut. The 52x11 show is CG-animated and carries the company's distinctive style of production. The project was also presented at Cartoon Forum in Kolding last month.

Also from the Barcelona-based house is Ted Vision, a 104x11 show aimed at kids, eight to 12. The star of the show is a bungling and self-centered TV reporter (boy, we can think of a lot of real-world models for this one!) who interviews people who claim to have broken absurd world records. Look for Lion Toons' CEO Marcial Carrillo and sales exec Jorge Patino to give you the real scoop behind these cool new projects in development.

Health Watch

Good parents worry about what their kids are eating more than ever before. That's why a show like Icon Animaton's Vitaminix may hit the spot in so many ways. Using very contemporary design, the Flash-animated 104x2 series teaches viewers about the nutritional value of foods, minerals and, of course, vitamins! A co-production between Digital Y Cual, Icon Animation and NGO Fundacion Intervida. the show has already found homes in many territories around the world (including Nick in Latin America, Hong Kong's HK Cable, Disney Channel in Italy and Asia and TPS in France). "Healthy eating is such an important educational issue, but you also need to entertain kids," says Christophe Goldberger, head of distribution and marketing at Icon Animation. "We're delighted to sign these deals further extending the brand across TV, video and publishing." We'll see if this new TV toon can actually inspire kids to eat their greens instead of begging for junk food 24/7!



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Big Monkey Business

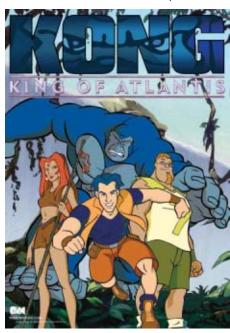
UTV Toons made big news last month when it entered into a \$10 million animation deal with BKN New Media. Under the terms of this major pact, UTV will be producing two major new shows for the company, one of which is the 26-episode season of the CG-animated Kong: The Next Generation. This development was

reportedly one of the biggest animation offers made to an Indian company.

"We aim to have the largest order book for an animation company in India in one year's time," says Ronnie Screwvala, CEO of UTV. "We believe there's a tremendous scope for our growth in this segment and we market both UTV as well as India as an ideal destination for animation."

According to Allen J. Bohbot, CEO of BKN International. Kong is

a centerpiece of the company's original animation slate. In addition to Kong: The Next Generation, the company will produce Kong II—Return to the Jungle as a feature film with UTV.



Make It Fast and Funny

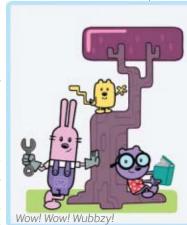


Is the world ready for a funny sketch comedy designed for kids? Considering that the folks at U.K.'s famous Aardman Animation and Toronto's Decode **Entertainment** (Bromwell High) are behind the 13 x 11 series, we have a feeling **Planet Sketch** is going to laugh all the way to the bank. Billed as Aardman's first foray into Flash and CG anima-

tion for television (the shop delivers Flushed Away, its first CG-animated feature via DreamWorks in 2007), the new series plans to entertain seven- to 11-year-old viewers. With loopy characters such as Gnaughty Gnomes, Rude Limerick Boy, Parping Ponies, Japanese Fighting Fish, Ninja Handyman, Nosepicker and My Mother the Armchair, there's no way kids are going to resist its juvenile humor. And we mean that in a very good way. The series premiered in the U.K. on ITV last month and will begin airing on Canada's Teletoon in November.

Strength in **Numbers**

Well, what do you know? IDT Entertainment is bringing so many new shows to the market, we could easily write volumes about the company's colorful 2006 slate. Blending 2D and CG animation, as well as live-



action and vfx-driven projects, IDT has a lot of shows aimed at different segments of the TV audience worldwide. There's The Zula Patrol, Deborah Manchester's clever CG-animated show which teaches kids all about astronomy and science; Me, Eloise, a new toon featuring Kay Thompson's beloved six-year-old character, and Wow! Wow! Wubbzy!, a preschool show featuring an imagina-

> tive set of whimsical friends.

> Of course, there's Stan Lee Presents, a collection of four 70minute feature toons from the master comic-book creator. Lee has promised to introduce the world to a whole new set of superheroes, one of

Me, Eloise

which is Ringo, a savvy secret agent that bears an uncanny resemblance to Ringo Starr! You might remember him from his work with this band called The Beatles back in the day!

If holiday programming is on your mind, then you can check out The Happy Elf, a new CG-animated special featuring the voice and music of Harry Connick Jr. (Check out our magazine next month for a nice article about this snappy DVD and TV project.)

"This Christmas special definitely puts a smile on my face," says Andrew Berman, exec VP of sales at IDT Entertainment. "It's based on the song of the same name by Harry Connick, Jr. and it's just a wonderful heart-warming story for the entire family."

Also on IDT's list of must-see family fare is Arthur's Missing Pal, a feature based on Marc Brown's popular aardvark character. This time around, our bespectacled hero gets a CG makeover.

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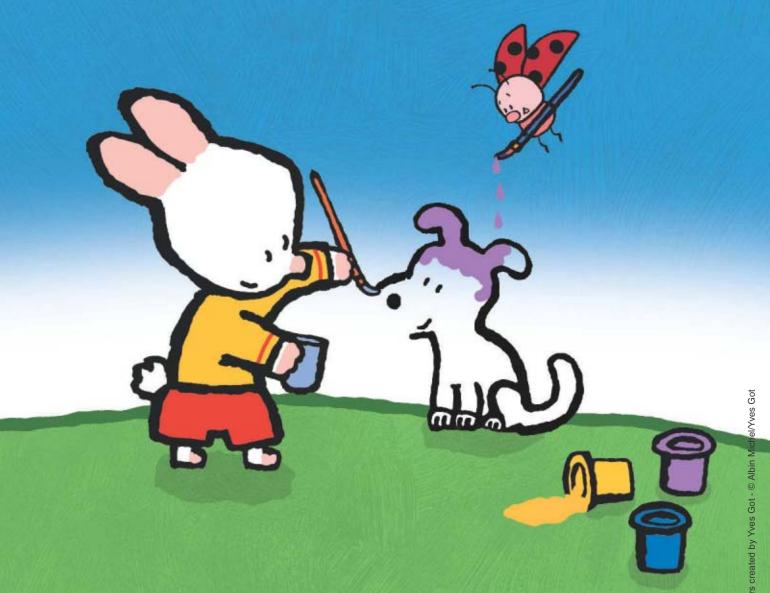






Louie

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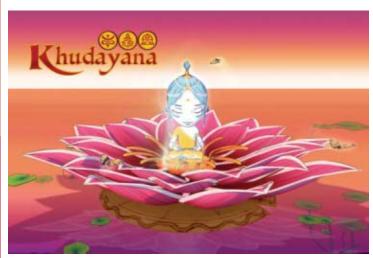




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Indian Manga Explosion



What do you get when you fuse the beautiful, ancient myths of India and a futuristic world of motorcycle racing teenagers? That's what seems to be the inspiration behind Khudayana, the expertly designed toon-shaded CGI co-production between Spain's BRB Internacional and Los Angeles outfit Al Ovadia and Associates.

Targeting the six-to-11-year-old boy demo, the series centers on Khuda, Sita and Chek, three skilled and savvy riders who challenge an evil ruler in the mystical land of Magesh. If things go smoothly, we can expect to see the lush show debut in the first quarter of 2007. Two seasons of 26 half-hours are in the works, with a \$195,000 budget per episode. Bring it on, shuravira—that's hero in Hindu!

Book Your Rooms Now!

Anyone who's ever observed kids at play knows that they love to battle imaginary villains in their make-believe universe. Cardiff-based outfit Calon (led by former Siriol veteran Robin Lyons) explores a brilliant premise in its new show in development, Safehouse Hotel. Created by comic book artists Mike Collins and Jose Luis Agreda, the show (a joint venture with Jurgen Egenolf Productions and Folimage) revolves around the action-packed world of a brother and sister whose unsuspecting parents run a seaside hotel that is, in fact, a nest of spies. Calon, which took the show to Cartoon Forum last month, will be looking for co-production partners in France

and Canada. The Flash-animated project will be aiming for the hearts of six- to 10-year-olds in 2007.

Old School Meets a Bright New World

"Our new preschool show Forest Friends is so classical that younger children are going to see it as a brand new style on TV," says Philippe Mournier, president of French house Timoon Animation. Created by Philippe Tierney, the (52x13) PMMP co-production follows the lives of seven animals, who have to forge a new life after a wildfire drives them out of their forest.

The company is also bringing the CG-animated Odd Family



to the market. This 26x6 show targets the six to 12 crowd and centers on a very eccentric clan who have unique ways of dealing with day-to-day challenges! "It's almost an animated sitcom for kids!" explains Mournier. "In addition, we also have Boowa & Kwala—a real interactive series where kids all over the world can choose the content of each episode every week by voting online. We live in a world where 2D and CG can easily exist on the screen in perfect harmony. They provide a wider choice for kids. New technologies have allowed us to offer shows that are completely different from what we did in the past."

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A Movie Moment for TV-Loonland

The classic tale of a bright-eyed Swiss orphan living in the Alpes region is going to help Munich-based TV-Loonland make the transition to the big screen. The company recently launched a new distribution arm titled Loonland Pictures to help market in-house

content and some third-party projects. "We believe that against the backdrop of a bitterly competitive distribution market worldwide, it is particularly important to search for marketing strategies that take the offensive," TV-Loonland's savs CEO Selma Käppel.

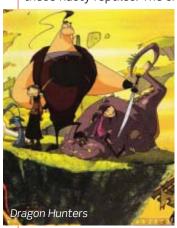
The new venture's first campaign will be the animated 8o-minute feature, Heidi, which is a co-production of TV-Loonland, its British subsidiary Telemagination and



Canada's Nelvana. Directed by Alan Simpson, the film will breathe new life to a character created by Swiss author Johanna Spyri just in time for the property's 125th anniversary.

Fire Hazard!

It's bad enough when you have to fight off one fire-breathing dragon. Lian Chi and Gwizo, the relentless heroes of Futurikon's great looking new series Dragon Hunters have to battle 50 of these nasty reptiles. The show, which will be screening at the mar-



ket, has already been sold in over 15 countries. Confirmed broadcasters include Cartoon Network (USA), France 3 and Canal J (France), RAI (Italy) and Super RTL (Germany). When the show first premiered in France, it attracted over 38% of the audience share. Not surprisingly, several licensing and merchandising deals have already been made globally, including a marketing deal with McDonald's in Germany. Of course, it doesn't hurt that the theme song for the show is performed by legendary Goth band, The Cure.

City Kid

"Bali has all the ingredients to become a global children's classic." savs Frederic Puech, exec producer of the new pre-



school toon. "It has very charismatic characters, a unique painterly graphic style, funky rhythms and cross-cultural urban experienc-

The 2D-animated 52 x13 series is the maiden voyage of new Paris-based indie Planet Nemo, which is joining forces with Canada's Subsequence Ent. and Hong Kong's Agogo to produce the preschool show. Created by popular French children's author Magdalena, the show centers on an inquisitive three-yearold (who kind of looks like a mouse to us), who lives in a fast-paced and colorful urban universe. Hong Kong pop musician Dick Lee provides the funky soundtrack to Bali's world. France 5, Disney TV in France, RTBF in Belgium, RaiSat in Italy, Radio Canada and TVO are some of the outlets set to deliver the bright-eyed show in the spring of 2006.

Most Popular Shows at Cartoon Forum '05

Germany

Ireland

Khudayana [BRB International] Spain Frankenstein's Cat [Mackinnon & Saunders] U.K. The Pinky & Perky Show [Pinky & Perky Enterprises] U.K. **Anna Young** Iceland [CAOZ] Little Kingdom [Astley Baker Davies] U.K. Minifant

[Toons & Tales GmbH]

Oliver Panpot [Funkhauser Films] Denmark Dad the Impaler

[Kavaleer] Ireland **Twisted Tales**

[Jam Media] 10. Safehouse Hotel

[Calon] U.K.

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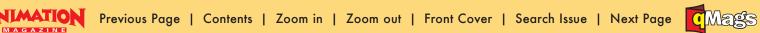


















Image Sharpens Focus with Walter and Constantine

Ithough industry observers are quite familiar with Montreal-based Image Entertainment Corporation because of its high-profile work as producer and co-producer of the hit shows Totally Spies! and Martin Mystery, the company expects to make a bigger splash in 2006. Thanks to president Sylvain Viau's flair for casting a wide net of contacts around the globe, the fledgling company will have a big presence at MIPCOM as well.

Last June, Image's own series, Walter, which

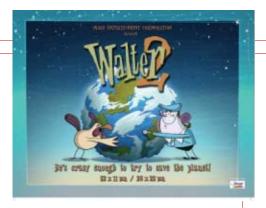
follows the adventures of an eccentric planet-hugger, was completed and the first 65 episodes began airing in September on France's TV5. Quebec's VRAK TV has also picked it up for a January launch. With his trusty sidekick Tandoori (which is neither a pooch nor an urchin, but a chicken!), Walter goes out on a pacific tour

of the planet. The witty and speechless hero's mission is to take on and remedy the ecological disasters he finds on his path.

Image has also just completed the development phase for three other series and is now seeking potential investment partners. These projects include two animated series-Walter 2 and Constantine as well as the hybrid show, Walter's World. Created by Marcel-Romain Thériault and Sylvain Viau, Walter 2 (52x11) represents a more powerful and detailed se-

> quel to the first season of Walter. In the second season, our bumbling hero returns to solve some of the planet's major ecological issues with hilarious results.

> Also on the company's drawing board is Constantine. This package was recently selected to participate in a special pitch session at the Ottawa Animation Festival. Very original in both presentation and content, Constantine is the story of a little girl with a



very vivid imagination who dreams up stories for her cast of friends. This compelling heroine was created by Tremblay Studio and P.M.M.P. studio.

Walter's World, on the boards for 13 episodes of 22 minutes each, finds the animated Walter character in a live-action world. This new hybrid concept, which integrates 2D and 3D animation with real images, is packed with visual gags and almost burlesque humor, but also manages to convey environmentally conscious messages in the spirit of Rachel Carson's ideologies which were developed almost 50 years ago. The concept was created by Gary Richards, Marcel-Romain Thériault and Sylvain Viau.

The team at Image Entertainment welcomes suggestions and is open to launch new business opportunities with potential partners. You can reach them at info@image-cie.com. For more info, visit www.image-cie.com. ■



Jojo Wins Cartoon D'Or

Marc Craste's haunting black-andwhite toon about tragic love and a little trapeze artist with rabbit ears was the big winner at the 16th edition of the Cartoon Forum held in Kolding,

Denmark, last month.

Out of 25 shorts selected from partner festival entries, jurors Karsten Kiilerich, Philippe Leclerc and Peter Lord awarded Craste's short, Jojo in the

> Stars with the Cartoon D'Or prize. The British animator, who also won a BAFTA for his short year, received 15,000 euros to work on a new project. Gaelle Denis' City Paradise, Peter Kaboth's Falling, Jonas Geirnaert's Flatlife and Daniel Greaves' Little Things were the four other heavyweights nominated in this category.

Craste told the BBC's Collective that he created Jojo in the Stars as a reaction to 15 years of making commercials. "I made three one-minute films for the [Studio AKA] website—little sketches with gratuitous violence in them. They then asked me to make a longer film using the same characters, but without any murders. And that took me back to the whole circus thing and doing a love story with freaks."

To build his beautiful black-andwhite world, Craste used Softimage XSI and After Effects. He said 15 years ago, he would have made the same short in traditional animation, but the low coast of animation software enabled him to try the CG approach. Craste is amused by observers who believe he was influenced by German Expressionism and Fellini's La Strada. "I haven't," he said. "It actually only goes as far back as the early '80s, to Eraserhead and Wings of Desire." ■



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tudies showing the benefits of exposing toddlers to classical music and fine arts may have played a big role in the success of the beautifully crafted Baby Einstein tapes and DVDs in the past few years. However, the right combination of whimsy, music and art was what pushed the projects to a higher level of critical and commercial exposure. This month, a new animated series extends the Baby Einstein message and spirit to a new target audience, the preschool set. Developed by the Baby Einstein Company, Playhouse Disney and a team of kids' TV experts, Little Einsteins promises to open a new and interactive world of adventures and learning for younger viewers.

"We knew that this was the kind of brand that could be extended far beyond toddlers," says Nancy Kanter, Disney Channel's senior VP of original programming. "Since the original Baby Einstein tapes are a combination of beautiful classical music and images and don't have specific storylines and characters, we needed to start from scratch."

Kanter recalls that the Playhouse Disney (Disney Channel's daily preschool block) creative team went straight to the parents to find out what their expectations would be for an older-skewing show. "We learned that parents liked the fact that classical music played such an integral part of the projects. Our goal was to use the music not in a preachy way, but in an organic powerful way to tell the story and inspire the viewers."

Leading the team was Eric Weiner, a twotime Emmy nominee whose credits include the acclaimed Dora the Explorer and JoJo's Circus series. "From the very first meeting we had, our child development expert Dr. Valeria Lovelace [former head of research for Sesame Street], whom I worked with on Dora, suggested that we should have wall-to-wall classical music."

The writing team came up with four central kid characters—Leo, Annie, Quincy and June—who fly all over the world in Rocket. The viewers at home are invited to join the characters as they visit the far corners of the earth, from the jungles of Africa to the Great Wall of China. It was a great way to open up the show for the preschool audience.

To animate the series, the producers went to New York-based Curious Pictures. "We wanted to give our audience a seamless mixture of live-action footage and



Nancy Kanter



Weiner

continued on page 54

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MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK!



CMags









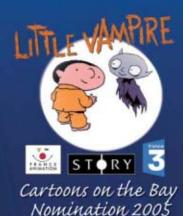












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Little Einsteins

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animation," says Kanter. "Our research showed that parents believed that there was a lot of saturation with the pure cartoony look on television. Kids are very open and eager to see the real world."

The show's creative director Olexa Hewryk (Little Bill, Blue's Clues) says the team opted for a clean collage look to deliver the visuals. "We use a combination of Painter, Photoshop, Flash and After Effects," he says. "We tried a lot of different textures and finally came up with a combination of photorealistic images, paintings and cel animation. Using drop-shades certainly helps in making the characters pop against the backgrounds and creates a nice illusion of depth. I have to give credit to our animation team for really working hard to deliver the show. It's a lot of hard work, but it's truly thrilling to take kids to places they've never been before, from the Leaning Tower of Pisa to the steps of the Forbidden City to Ayers Rock in Australia."

"We really wanted to push this unique and fresh look," says Kanter. "Our big goal was to be able to move seamlessly from a great work of art by Van Gogh or Paul Klee or a Navajo painting and weave it seamlessly into the world of the show's characters. For example, we have the rocket flying against a sky and have the clouds magically turn into the familiar swirly shapes of a Van Gogh painting."

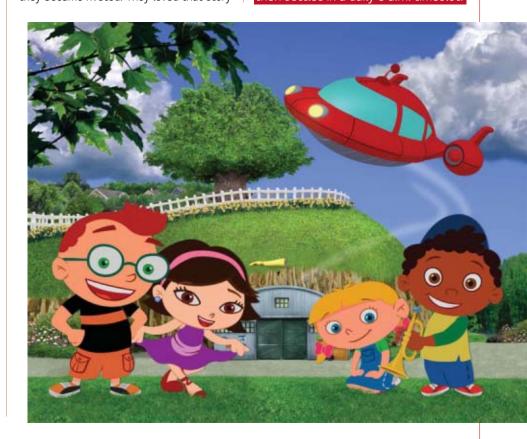
Because world-famous classical pieces are used to accompany the show's animation, the writing for each sequence had to be tweaked and honed to match the music constantly. Then after the sequence was animated, more post-work was required to make the music blend perfectly with the action.

For Weiner, one of the most rewarding aspects of the show is watching how preschoolers react to the stories. "Our writers read to groups of preschoolers to gauge their reaction," says Weiner. "It's an age group that is eager to love the story, but they will tell you right away when they hate it. One of our writers, Jeff [Borkin], was reading a Christmas-themed episode to the kids, and he asked the kids to tell him about their wish box—a magic box that would give them what they wished for-and once the kids were asked to participate in the story, they became riveted. They loved that story so much that they burst into applause, and Jeff turned bright red because he'd never experienced anything like that."

Another high point for the team was when they visited a New York City preschool for kids from low-income families. "This was a school with had no music programs, and the kids were all running wild," Weiner explains. "But they went ahead and played the music for them, which was Bach's Brandenberg Concerto, and as soon as the kids heard the music, they stopped what they were doing and began to dance to it. You can't really beat the excitement this kind of research creates for us."

This kind of hands-on research is more than essential for preschool shows, says Weiner. "It's almost as if preschoolers are a different species altogether," he adds. "Their definition of what's funny can be completely different from what we think would appeal to them. They're laughing at details that we had no idea would be important. As Dr. Valeria [Lovelace] likes to say, 'They have to be in it,' and you can really feel it when the kids are in the story or not!" ■

Little Einsteins premieres on the Disney Channel at 7 p.m. on October 9. It then settles in a daily 8 a.m. timeslot.



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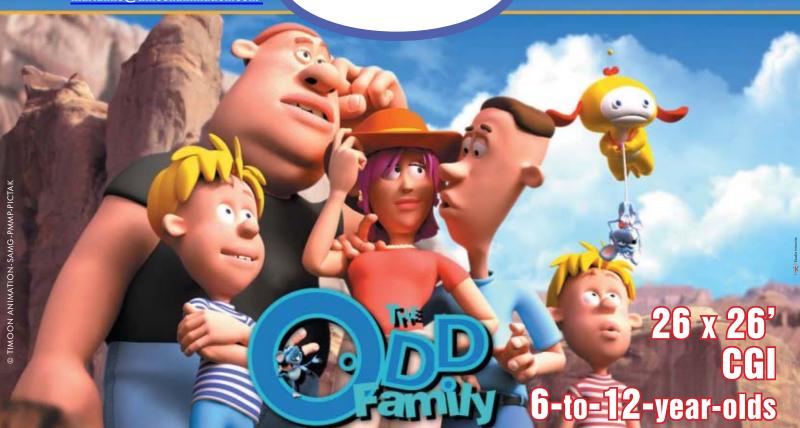


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Biker Mice Ride Back to Town

Three big cheeses from the 'gos toon scene get a 21st century makeover. by Ramin Zahed

ith all disaster and bad news in our lives, it's good to know that Throttle, Modo and Vinnie will be resuming their heroic actions on Earth. Yes, the stars of Rick Ungar's popular 'gos animated series, Biker Mice From Mars, are getting a makeover and will battle new evil villains with all kinds of cool customized biker gear and gadgets.

Ungar's company, Brentwood Television Funnies, has joined forces Philippines-based toon studio pasi and Criterion Licensing to launch a new 26-part series. Also on board as character designer for the show is

comic-book artist Bernie Wrightson, whose credits include Swamp Thing, Batman and The Punisher.

Although the series only ran for three seasons and 65 episodes, it left quite an impression on the pop culture landscape of the decade. After all, who

> can resist the charms of three humanoid rodents who leave their home planet to save Earth from intergalactic evil? In addition to the three lead voices provided by Dorian Hareweood, Rob Paulsen and Ian Ziering, the show

> attracted a stellar list of



guests-Julian Sands, Peter Strauss, Leah Remini, Malcolm McDowell, Brad Garrett, Jason Priestley, Luke Perry, Jennie Garth, Tori Spelling and Brian

Austin Green (Yes, the last five are all of Ziering's castmates from Beverly Hills 90210,) to name a few! "The show is really my favorite," says Ungar. "Biker Mice gave me a life and I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to do it again. I was in L.A. last week casting the show and just being in the studio with the original cast o f was a total rush. I like

these guys so much, and

after 12 years, it was a real

Ungar points out that the

show was a huge sensation in Europe, especially in France and Italy. "I'd like to tell you that it was my idea to revisit the Mice," he says, "but in fact, it was a toy company

in Italy that called us and expressed an interest. Then Criterion Limited in the U.K. got involved to put the deal together. We were also very fortunate to have Tom Tataranowicz back on the project because he really knows the Mice inside and out."

reunion."

In addition to his big alien mice project, Ungar is handling a new BKN series called Dork Hunters from Outer Space about three teen agents of an intergalactic protective agency who take a wrong turn and end up in Paramus, New Jersey, as well as Legend of the Dragon, which is based on the signs of the Chinese zodiac. "The show ranked first place in Nickelodeon Latin America and will begin airing on BBC1 in the

fall and Super RTL in Germany and RTVE in Spain next year."

Despite all the ventures, conversation always goes back to to the three mice, and Ungar is glad to share some new scoops about his favorite show. "Although the bulk of the animation will be in 2D, we plan to use CGI animation for the motorcycles. Some the minor good characters

from the original series will play bigger parts now. There's definitely a more female presence in their world as well."

Like any good yarn, Biker Mice will introduce a new slate of hissworthy villains. We hear that our heroes are in hot pursuit of a weapon owned by an evil developer/billionaire known as Ronaldo Rump. Any resemblance to live-action Earth tycoon and reality show star Donald Trump may be strictly unintentional! Ride free, citizens, indeed! ■



more information, unofficial fan website at www. bikermice.com

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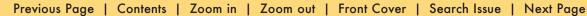
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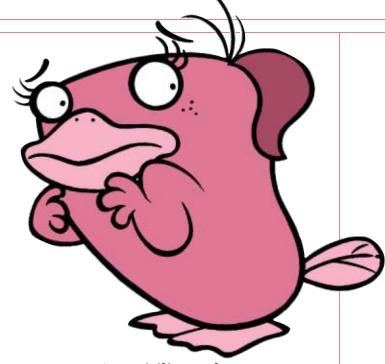


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Channeling Dr. Moreau!

Hilarious hybrid animals try to live like humans in Nelvana's new series, Spliced! by Ramin Zahed

f you have fond memories of the classic H.G. Wells' yarn, The Island of Dr. Moreau, you'll definitely get a kick out of Nelvana's animated series, Spliced! Created by Richard Elliott and Simon Racioppa, the show has a wonderfully twisted premise: When a mad scientist is taken away by authorities, his mutant animal creations try to live like a human community, with disastrous results!

Nelvana's VP of development Christie Dreyfuss says she immediately loved the concept when it was pitched to her by Elliott and Racioppa a year ago. "These guys are seasoned animation writers," she notes. "They've worked on several Nelvana shows [such as Jacob Two-Two, Jane and the Dragon and Franklin] as well as Teen Titans, Lazy-

> town and Totally Spies! We knew the show was going to be laughout funny. These animals may be mutant freaks, but they're actually adorable!"

"We're thrilled to witness what can happen when a talented writing team puts on its creative Christie Dreyfuss hat, which in this case is a very

original show," says Scott Dyer, exec VP of production and development at Nelvana.

Spliced!'s two main characters are Peri, a childlike fuzzy creature (which nobody can actually identify!) and Entrée, a delicious mixture of cow, pig, chicken and tuna that makes everyone on the island drool with hunger. In a typical episode, Peri and Entrée become obsessed with a bowling alley that washes up on the shore. Their newly polished bowling skills help them defeat an army of aliens who just happen to look like bowling pins! In another show, our goofy heroes have to fight the domination schemes of an evolved snake from the future, which has a really awful fashion sense.

"The key to the design of the show is that although these creatures are mutants and hybrids, they have to be cute," says Dreyfuss. "Initially, we were inspired by the look of properties such as Ugly Dolls and Naughty Naughty Pets, and then we took it a few steps farther. If you look at the character designs today, you can see that they're pretty striking."

Based in Toronto, Nevlana produces over

120 half-hours of animated programming each year. Rolie Polie Olie, Franklin, Babar and Beyblade are some of the company's toon triumphs. Spliced! is one of several hot animated shows the company is taking to the MIPCOM TV market in France in October.

Dreyfuss says she's always on the lookout for comedies that make her laugh out loud. "I look for shows that feel unique and fresh. A key thing for me is to have material that comes from a creator (or creators) with a strong vision. I don't want them to wait for me to tell them what I'm looking for!" She also believes that the Spliced! experience has been one of the smoothest development processes of her seven-year tenure at Nelvana. "Now our biggest challenge is to get the right voice talent for these great characters."

At this point, the producers of the 26x30 series can only tell us that the series will be a 2D, digitally animated show, but it's clear that its target audience is kids six to 11. However, Dreyfuss has a feeling the show is also going to appeal to an older audience. "My husband is definitely going to watch it," she adds.

Also on Nelvana's development slate this year is an animated feature project based on The Mob, Clem Martini's best-selling book which does for a family of crows what Watership Down did for rabbits almost three decades ago.■

For more info about Nelvana, visit www.corusentertainment.com.

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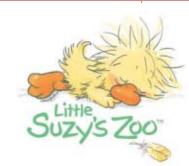






Searching for Digital Disciples

Earthworks Entertainment president Peter Keefe unleashes a new multiplatform-driven toon world, by Ramin Zahed



f you happen to run into animation business veteran Peter Keefe these days, you're lucky to get in a word edgewise. The man is juggling so many smart animated projects and licensing deals, it will probably take him at least half a day to give you a brief rundown of what's happening in his world.

He's particularly passionate about his upcoming animated series The Z-Force, which he's taking to the MIPCOM market in October. A joint venture with his long-time collaborator Paul Vitello (They worked on Voltron together.) and animator Kamoon Song (Aeon Flux, Nine Dog Christmas), the show focuses on superhero characters with powers relating to the 12 signs of the ancient Chinese zodiac.

"Given the fact that three-fifths of the world's children live in Asia, our focus is the digital realm of discovery and empowerment," says Keefe. "The key words are personalized portable play patterns. Kids love to feel that they are special and have unique qualities. You have this immediate role-play potential with the zodiac signs. You can be a tiger or a dragon or a rat. You want to find out what your friends are. You have a crush on this girl, and you want to figure out what animal she is!"

Keefe is the first to tell you that the days of relying on television to spread the word on a new brand are long gone. "It's all about getting our properties closer to being household names, whether they're on DVD, VOD, mobile phones, etc.," he notes. "Research shows that by 2008, DVDs are

going to be a 40 billion dollar business, and kids makes up 17 percent of that consumer group. The idea is to tease the properties on other DVDs or create a TV commercial for the brand that looks like a movie and send viewers to a Peter Keefe

website. I see it as germinat-

ing a happy idea virus."

But, wait, Keefe has even more happy ideas. "Kids want to sculpt their own universe. We want to help them find themselves. We say here's a kit you can download and build your own world. Here's what makes you special. Gone are the days when you just sat in front of the same station for

three hours. Why do you think the Spider-Man role-playing sleeves were so popular in toy stores? That's because they allowed kids to become their own heroes."

Keefe's company, Earthworks Entertainment, also signed a deal with European toon entity Millimages to rep the U.S. merchandise licensing and publishing rights for its TV show 64 Zoo Lane. The animated series, which airs on Noggin in the U.S., follows the adventures of a regular girl who, as Keefe describes it "has magnificent adventures with her animal friends at the zoo next door."

Also on the Earthworks U.S. licensing and merchandising slate are Corneil & Bernie (another Millimages toon which airs on Nick Toons), Plonsters, Kiddo the Super-Truck, Wags and Whiskers and The Little Reindeer. The company is also developing shows based on the popular Big Dogs and Little Suzy's Zoo properties.

"The old models don't work anymore," Keefe concludes. "You see the big studios trying to branch out, but they don't have the puissance to cross-promote as quickly as a smaller indie company. They're just trying to nail jello to a tree. We are looking for partners, but we want everyone to bring something to the mix. We look for disciples!"

Keefe sounds so convincing that we have a feeling he's going to have a lot





of disciples on his hands before the fourth quarter draws to a close this year. And you certainly don't need the Chinese zodiac to predict big things for Earthworks in

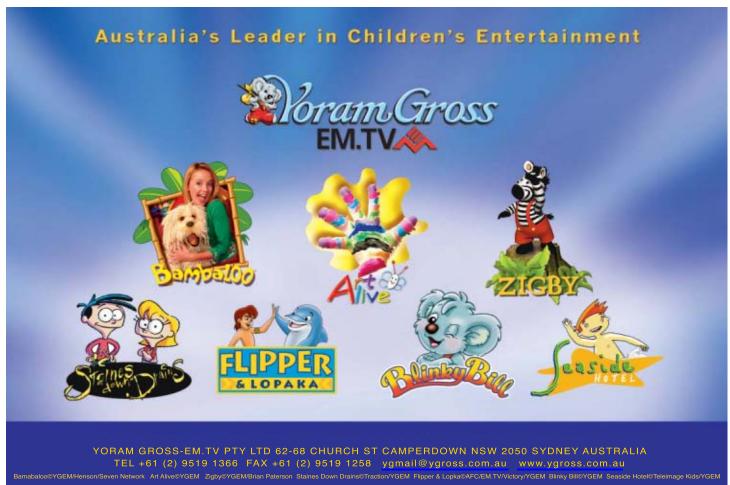
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For more info. visit www.earthworksentertainment.com

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A Claymation Classic Lands on The Simpsons' Couch

by Mark Simon

he Simpsons have a new pal, and he was once a little green slab of clay. A parody of Gumby (with the lump on the opposite side of his head and featuring the classic Simpsons bulbous upper lip) makes an appearance on the family couch opener of the long-running Fox series this season.

To achieve the proper look, the show's producers decided, for the first time, to have their classic opening gag produced in stop-motion claymation. After all, Gumby just wouldn't be the same any other way. To fulfill their vision, the production team went to their number-one choice for stop-motion animation, the Chiodo brothers, Stephen, Charlie and Edward.

This wasn't the first time the Chiodos worked on the iconic Fox series. Over the years, they produced other stop-motion elements for The Simpsons—namely, a California Raisins parody for a Christmas episode as well as a Davey and Goliath spoof in an Emmy-winning episode.

The Simpsons supervising producer Larina Adamson had actually directed a pilot for the Chiodos a number of years ago on their Amazing Live Sea Monkeys project. "They're great! We love them," says Adamson. She originally introduced the Chiodos to The Simpsons production team, and it's been a marriage made in clay.

The action for the eight-second opening has five lumps of colorful clay rolling into frame, bouncing onto the couch and then morphing into each of the five members of the Simpsons clan. The camera then pulls out to reveal Gumby sitting on the couch as well.

After the show writers came up with the couch gags, the ideas were given to the Chiodos as well as samples of other couch gags for reference. No storyboards were created for the opening. To start, the Chiodos made a quick 3D mock-up of the set and foam-core cutouts of the characters for framing purposes. Then Stephen made a quick animatic in After Effects of the basic motions for timing purposes and approvals, while Charlie built a set to accommodate the finished eight-inch-tall figures.

To achieve the proper look, the Chiodos used a combination of clay (custom colored by Charlie) and Super Sculpey. The character heads and main bodies were sculpted (by Stephen) with the material to eliminate problems with fingerprints. The lower jaws, arms, legs and necks were made of clay for animating.

The balls rolling into the frame were clay made of each character's colors. To morph the characters from balls of clay, Stephen placed each character into the camera frame, traced the character outline on a monitor and then sketched the outlines of the three intermediary characters on the monitor as well. The morphing elements were all sculpted on camera to fit within the outlines sketched on the monitor. While the morph was created with replacement animation, the in-betweens were achieved with

The lighting and camera setup (by Edward) used a Nikon Coolpix digital still camera with a video tap into a Video Lunchbox. The Lunchbox

was used for testing the animation, and each frame was captured at 3K resolution straight

into After Effects. The higher resolution allowed for better quality inbetweens and for the digital zoom out revealing Gumby.

Kim Animator Blanchette was brought in to handle the actual claymation. He also worked on The Nightmare Before Christmas and Disney's Clay character on Playhouse Disney. Blanchette his crew took one month to complete the task. The development and fabrication took about three weeks, and the shoot, compositing and editing took about a week.

Now that all the hard work is over, it sounds like America's favorite yellow family has once again been touched by another colorful family, the Chiodo Bros. "Whenever we have stop motion or a future claymation, we just go to them. I see no reason to go anywhere else," says Adamson.

Mark Simon is a producer, director, lecturer and author of Animation and Sto-Art. You can order sons set. his books at www. Photo by Stephen Chiodo. com.











(1) Stephen Chiodo sketching morph positions on a production monitor.

Photo by Mark Simon.

(2) Stephen Chiodo model-Facial Expressions, ing clay onto final character Producing Indepen- SCULPTS. Photo by Mark Simon.

dent 2D Character (3) Homer replacement animation morph.

Photo by Stephen Chiodo.

ryboards: Motion In (4) Clay balls on the Simp-

MarkSimonBooks. (5) Animator Kim Blanchette. Photo by Stephen Chiodo.

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KIPA Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency





The Padded Cel

When summer B.O. really stinks. animation smells like roses.



by Robby London

t's that time of year again. Amber leaves carpet the lawn. Chilly afternoons flee earlier. The neighborhood kids contemplate costumes and stock up on projectiles with which to destroy my new paint job. At this time it behooves us to apply some mature perspective to the summer past. Why? Because anything's better than more trite

autumn imagery. In the summer of '05, we can safely conclude that global warming was the big winner, and the movie box office was the big loser. Assuming, of course, that we limit ourselves to subjects of dire consequence to the future of mankind.

Without meaning to invoke the obvious political analogy, the abject failure of this summer's movie slate is arguably the bitter harvest of years of

neglect, creative laziness, corporate greed, executive cowardice and lack of vision. As it happens, these are subjects we know just a little something about here in The Padded

Naturally, the executives who greenlit so many flops and the filmmakers who made them are quick to cite socio-cultural forces beyond their control such as DVD penetration, home theater systems, fragmentation of the entertainment marketplace, piracy, gas prices and cooties on theater seats. Exhibitors, in turn, blame the studios. Screenwriters blame their agents, their parents, spouses, teachers and random strangers. And, now that it's safe, everyone blames Michael Eisner.

The reliance on formulaic, effects-driven

tentpole movies has become so formulaic as to become a parody of itself. The trailers alone are stultifying, predictable and clichéd. Sandwiched between the action releases are the same youth comedy stars playing the same roles (Only the names of the characters seem to change) until the same scatological shtick simply stops being funny. Throw in

it lying around. The answer is Madagascar at \$192 million. And because such a large component of the audience for animation is kids, animated movies are virtually assured a proportionately larger home entertainment aftermarket, not to mention all the other ancillary merchandise which appeals mostly to the young.

> While admittedly there were also animated box office disappointments, I can only think of two which were high-profile studio releases: Valiant and Howl's Moving Castle. That means one out of three hit big. Compare that batting average to live action! And, in animation, even the losers fare better in worldwide recoupment because animation travels so well, and kids everywhere drive more sales of merchandise and

DVDs. (Editor's note: Miyazaki's Howl would actually be considered a hit if it was categorized as an arthouse pic.)

For all these reasons, animated features continue to be a higher percentage bet and, arguably, the lowest risk bet in the house. They are like blackjack. It may not be the most glamorous game in Monte Carlo (When's the last time you heard James Bond say "Hit me."?). But at least you'll only lose your shirt and not your entire summer wardrobe. It beats craps—and god knows we had more than enough of that this summer.

Robby London is an animation industry veteran who was last seen telling off-color jokes to Princess Stephanie at a crap table in Monaco.



revolting, bottom-of-the-barrel TV retreads (The Dukes of Hazzard, Bewitched) and it's no wonder the audience revolted. To be sure, there were exceptions (Batman Begins, Wedding Crashers and The 40-Year-Old Virgin come to mind.) in which tired genres actually delivered stories barely fresh enough to inspire some word-of-mouth. But by summer's end, so many movies had opened to the sound of silence that Simon & Garfunkel earned more royalties than Russell Crowe.

Which leads us to ... animated features. Can you guess the sixth highest grossing summer feature as we go to press? (If you guessed The Island, I hope you're only reading this because you work in the unemployment office and some animation writer left

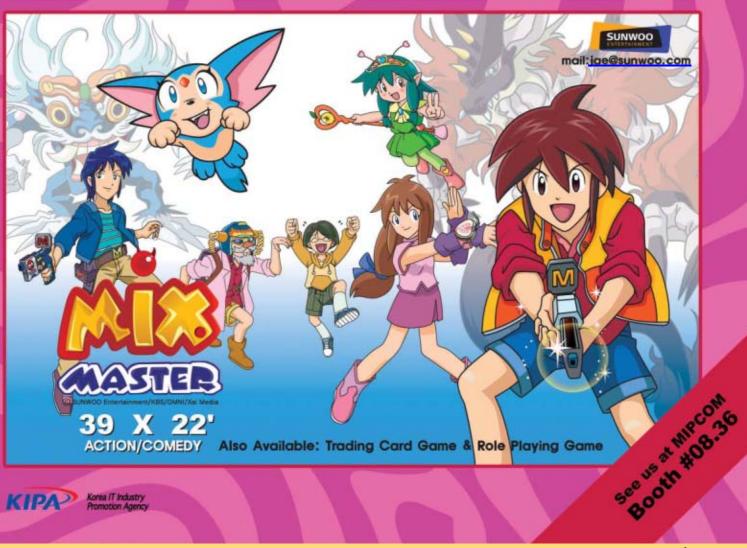
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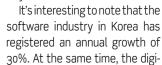
The Korean Digital Connection

MIPCOM attendees will see a large Korean presence thanks to strong non-profit promo organizations such as KIPA.

orean animation will be well represented at MIPCOM this year. In addition to the various animation and digital content producers, the country's IT Industry Promotion Agency known as KIPA, will be an active force in the market. Established in 1998 by the country's Ministry of Information and Communication, the non-profit organization will spend \$2.5 million to promote Korean digital animation this year.

"In order to meet the demands of the

times, it is essential for the Information Technology industries in many countries to promote exchange and cooperation," says Taek-Min Kwon, VP of KIPA's Digital Contents Business Group. "In this regard, KIPA strives to further exchange and cooperate between the Korean and international IT enterprises. By consolidating a cooperative network globally, KIPA aims to help the global digital community share mutual benefits."



tal contents sector has posted a 56% growth

Taek-Min

Seongjin

(that's \$220.2 million in 2004, and an estimated \$334.7 in 2005). Not surprisingly, KIPA is actively supporting online gaming, 3D animation, e-learning and various other next-generation broadband content projects. Another big goal is developing HDTV content

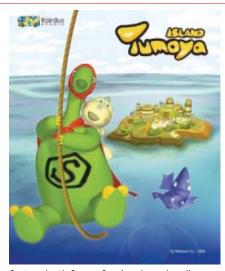
and platform conversion support.

"Since the terrestrial TV stations have to air High-Def programs compulsorily, there's a big demand for HD animation," says Seong-Jin Kim, KIPA's manager of visual graphics business department. "KIPA is one of the actively supportive organizations for HD programs. Not only does the organization subsidize funding for HD content, it runs a highly facilitated HD studio which offers producers low rental fees."

Wonjung Kim, sales manager at Seoulbased animation house Iconix Entertainment (www.iconix.co.kr) points out that MIPCOM attendees will see the new wave of CG and HD animated series at the market. "Iconix will be launching the second season of (52x7) Pororo the Little Penguin as well as a (13x3) Pororo Sing-Along package," he notes. Synergy Media will offer the well-received CGI-animated series Bernard (52x3) for HDTV and RainBus is bringing the preschool series Tumoya Island, which is also made for High Def-TV. These programs have all been supported by KIPA's digital content promotion in 2003 and 2004.

Iconix has had great success with the Pororo series in numerous territories in the past two years. "It's one of Korea's most popular animated shows and licensing characters," says Kim. "It has also become very popular in neighboring Asian countries, including Taiwan, India and China. This winter Kidz Entertainment will launch the show in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland. We're looking forward to the second season of the show as well. Two new friends arrive in Pororo's village and join the fun for more exciting adventures. The Pororo Sing-Along show offers song and dance numbers as well as educational lessons."

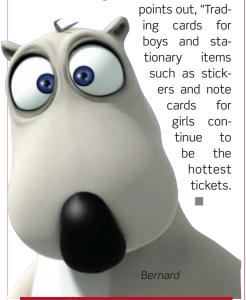
Although many animation producers are making waves in the CG arena, traditional toons continue to attract audiences as well. "Although CG animation has a lot of appealing



factors both for professionals and audiences, 2D animation also has its firm supporters, especially for kids' animation targeting the six-to-12 age group and anime categories. However, in the preschool arena, CG animation and puppet animation seems to be more popular than 2D."

Among the many new preschool faves in the country is DHInet's iloveegg phenomenon. Featuring 18 main characters and 37 support players, the eggs are the stars of 13 Flash-animated episodes and 100 clayanimated segments of their own. Flower Egg, Strawberry Egg, Angel Egg, Demon Egg, Bomb Egg, Santa Egg, Rabbit Egg, you name it—they are all big in Korea!

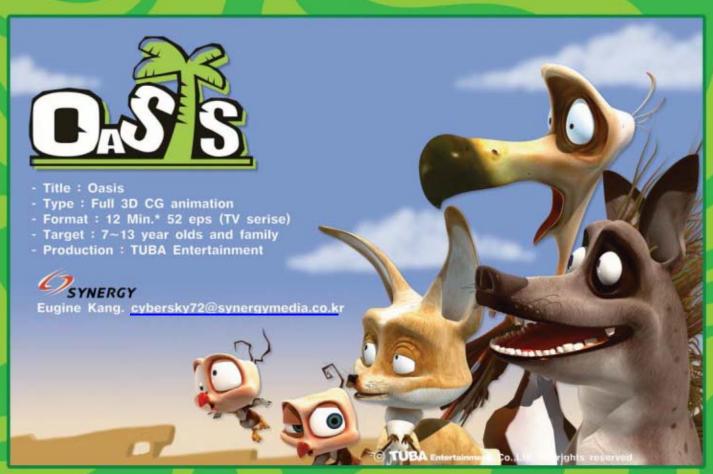
Of course, if you work in animation, you always have to keep a close eye on the licensing universe as well. Kim



For more info, visit www.software. or.kr/kipahome/kipaweb/english/ index.html.

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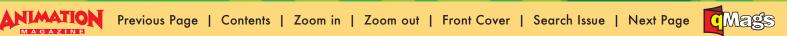








Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency





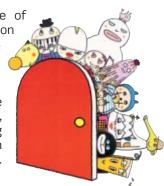
Wheels and Deals

BY RAMIN ZAHED

VIZ and Copyright Tie the Knot

If you need one more reason to keep an eye on the booming Japanese licensing arena, you can find it in the recent news that San Franciscobased manga outfit VIZ Media has joined forces with London-based Copyright Promotions Licensing Group. Under the VIZ Media B.V. banner, the new venture strives to generate new business opportunities and revenue streams by coordinating all aspects of brand development through a property's lifecycle. VIZ Media and CPLG will each hold a 50% share in the new venture which was officially launched in Amsterdam on October 3.

VIZ Media B.V. has access to some of the most popular manga and animation properties owned by VIZ Media's parent companies, Shueisha Inc. and Shogakukan Inc., the largest publishing houses in Japan, and ShoPro. Deko Boko Friends, Mär and Bleach are among the first titles offered by the new enterprise, which will encompass content ranging fom preschool to boys' action, girls' action and niche sci-fi and fantasy properties. For more info, visit ww.viz.com



Time for that London Show!

If you're ready to get your big licensing splash in Europe, then it's almost time to make travel plans for London's big Brand Licensing Expo (October 25, 26). With 150 exhibitors, and close to 5,500 manufacturers and properties and brands outfits taking their goods to the



city's Earls Court 2, you'll have plenty of ways to get exposure for your products. In addition to checking out the latest from the exhibitors—Nelvana, Celador. HIT, Dargaud-Dupuis, FableVision, Jetix, Ragdoll, Fox, Nick and Jetix were some of the companies registered at press

attendees can also learn a lot from the show's panels. Among the topics on the schedule: branding for mobile entertainment, the secrets of royalties, children's relationship with licensing, opportunities in the Far East and gender-specific marketing. All of that as well as checking out the latest Hasbro toys for The Chronicles of Narnia? That's what we call sheer toy bliss! For more info, visit www.brandlicensingexpo.com



Playtime for Bugs

It looks like Disneyland is going to get a little bit of competition from the folks at Warner Bros. Last month, the first **Looney Tunes**-themed play area opened its doors at the Northlake Mall in Charlotte, North Carolina. This is the first in a series of planned play arenas with Looney Tunes themes by **Taubman Centers**, which owns and operates 22 malls in the U.S.

Young visitors to the Northlake mall can now hang out with 3D versions of Bugs, Daffy, Speedy, Marvin the Martian and others, as a four-foot-tall Taz squirts paint throughout the area and a 16-foot Pepe Le Pew offers his upright tail as a slide and crawl-through. The area is also equipped with state-of-the-art sound chips which make the experience even more cartoonlike. Somebody please book us on the next flight to Charlotte, pronto!

Hot Items

- My Little Pony Tiny Tins (Hasbro)
- Barbie as Princess Anneliese (Mattel)
- Ocean Wonders Aquarium (Fisher-Price) 3.
- iDog (Hasbro) 4.
- Rescue Hero Bi-Pod Jet (Fisher-Price) 5.
- 6. Singing King Funshine Care Bears (Play Along)
- Mr. Potato Head Darth Tater (Hasbro) 7.
- 8. Batman Begins Bronze Figure (Mattel)
- Darth Vader Voice Changer Helmet (Hasbro) 9.
- Dora the Explorer Mr. Face Backpack (Global Design) 10.

Source: Amazon.com tov chart. 10/16/05

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Goin' Mobile

A look at the many factors that make animation the ideal partner in the field, by Christopher Panzner

e've been hearing the same mantra at content creation events all over the world for the past few years: Animation has an important role to play in the mobile entertainment world. There is demand for animated products because animation is an ideal medium for mobile entertainment. Vital to success as a content provider, however, is understanding not only the technology but the behavior of the consumer vis-à-vis the technology and emerging business models. And to keep in mind one of the cardinal rules of mobile: Keep it local and personal.

Technology and Content

A large percentage of the players in the mo-

bile entertainment business come from the technical side where emphasis tends to be on technology. Content, however is the key to attracting consumers to mobile entertainment and to making them repeat customers.

Christopher Panzner

Mobile market studies show that many consumers feel there is no relevant content out there for them. This is not really due to a lack of product but rather to a lack of good original product adapted to the medium. At the moment, much of the mobile content is coming from recycled products ("found" money for license holders). Because this content is not properly adapted to the mobile medium, however, the consumer is often disappointed. Intelligent re-purposing is a fine market but it doesn't mean "recycling." It means taking an existing product and redesigning/rebuilding it for the mobile. Repurposed content needs to be considered care-

fully and produced cleverly, usually in a shortened form. The medium has technical limitations that are critical to understanding the content provider business: file size, placement of the subject in the screen, contrast levels, background complexity, diffused colors and even battery size are real issues, whether for wallpaper or a short video.

Obviously, there are

commercial considerations: Outtakes or clips, for example, need to be stand alone, not require viewer memory of "before" or "after" or of related products, to be evergreen, relatively simple and of good quality because people are paying for it. Currently, mobile—particularly 2.5G (an enhanced version of second generation mobile technology with data rates of up to 144kbit/sec)—is better for products that are either predominantly audio or predominantly visual, but it is not yet ready for products that are both.

This is not only due to the technical constraints but also because the mobile product is a multi-tasking device. We are usually using it when we are doing other things (walking, on the train, etc.). We are distracted, which means that all or part of our attention can be pulled away at any moment, so products need to have a "pause factor;" i.e., stopping the product does not affect its appeal and picking it up again is satisfying. Content producers need to keep this in mind and design mobile entertainment programming that takes the same time to watch as it does to travel from one train stop to the next.

Downloading and screening video is going to be a significant application in the mobile space. Video—anything longer than a four-to-15-frame animated gif—is only just making its mark on the mobile, at least in the Western territories. Issues of compression, lip sync, strobing and other problems can lead to disappointment for the end user when dealing with live action reduced to a 12-frame rate. Animation is ideal because it is simple, lightweight, cheaper to produce than live action in most cases and it is easy to make a product with an original frame rate of 12. In fact, we often prefer it! Animation also has a distinct advantage because a one-to-one rate is much more pleasing than a compressed product. What's more, to make mobile content commercially viable it needs to be sold in several markets,

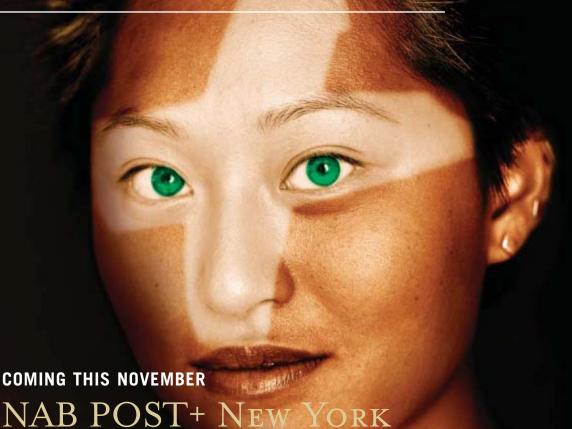


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Wallace & Gromit's new mobile game was developed ov Frontier.

so voice-off or non-language products like animation are easier to mass market.

Surprise and Demand

"The media industry has been through a difficult re-structuring in the past three years. This means that entertainment businesses are often facing uncharted territory when structuring deals and finding partners in mobile," says Ivanka Hahnenberger of Dublin-based, CAA-represented Roving Stage Productions. The mobile segment of her company is an aggregator, publisher, producer and distributor of mobile phone personalization and entertainment products and concepts. "We represent a variety of products but also ideas for the product creators as well as the operators. Our focus is on finding or creating the highest quality original products that appeal to a variety of consumer groups.

The changed market horizon is forcing those seeking finance to look outside of country and traditional partnership borders. At the same time local markets are feeling more attracted to local thinking and products. This means that a different type of media and entertainment business is emerging: one which needs to incorporate an international variety of business standards, practices, goals and cultures."

RSP-Mobile has alliances with mobile technology experts and content providers in Australia, China, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Korea, Thailand, the U.K. and the U.S. for clients as diverse as production, investment and insurance companies, banks, law firms, broadcasters and individual artists.

The mobile market is overly mature in Asia, fast-growing in Europe and lagging behind in North America where mobile phones are quaintly referred to as "cell" phones, a leftover from the old days where transponder "cells" were few and far between. North America is in the mobile dark ages because the telcos made it as difficult as possible for their customers to communicate with anyone using a competing carrier. As a result, they lost billions in revenue and the market is way behind the rest of the world.

David Gurney of Blue Rocket Productions, an innovative Tasmania-based digital animation studio that produces cartoons for television, broad-

band and mobile, explains, "Mobile has evolved differently from the Internet, which began as an underground technology and with that came the now deeply entrenched belief that everything on the Internet should be free. Mobile however, grew from telecommunications companies investing hugely to establish [and control] complex networks. Early adopters paid premium prices for the privilege of using the networks and that has filtered down to an acceptance by customers that it's normal to pay for everything you do with a mobile phone. Unlike the Internet, every single byte of data must be paid for."





Three years ago, Blue Rocket began leveraging its success in the broadcast arena to exploit emerging distribution channels, particularly those opportunities afforded by broadband and mobile technologies. The studio's mobile content, including animated wallpapers, MMS and 3G (third generation content, the latest cellular networks that have data rates of 384 kbit/sec and more), is distributed by several large aggregators worldwide. Interestingly, the company produces a cartoon series, Bang the Cat, for mobile which has since been picked up for TV distribution. "The customer's purchasing decision is complex because the consumer will only pay and download something they really want. A download costs money and uses memory on the phone, so when you are offering product you are not only fighting for the consumer dollar, you are fighting for the consumer's memory space. But there is still always space for content that is evergreen or 'everfunny' and viril. That is something that people want to tell their friends about or send on, so there is a big opportunity for animation products."

The Primary Colors of Money

The three keys to success in the mobile phone content business are good placement on a portal, "white labelling" (selling your product brandless through another company and possibly as "theirs") to brands or companies that have good placement and buying a good position. Marketing is also important. "There is a degree of viral marketing that can lead to moderate success but marketing on other channels is imperative for general success. Brand does matter. On the mobile [like any other business] it is a question of discovery," says Richard Sedgwick, formerly head of Data Business Development for O2 U.K. and now with Motricity.

"Good partnerships, representation and a good service provider are the keys to success," says Hahnenberger. Gurney adds, "A good aggregator is the only way you will get to the operators. Carriers don't want to deal with creatives, they're noisy and messy! Ideally, carriers want to deal with a content aggregator that can provide them with a solution to their mobile content requirements from animation to movie stars and naked girls to sports heroes. Instead of having to deal with someone walking in with a few cartoons, the carriers prefer to deal with an aggregator who can provide them with and manage a complete range of content that will work on all their customers' phones with the least amount of complaints."

Aggregation is about volume and carriers prefer to work with regular and reliable suppliers. "The individual unit or even series is not as important as the on-going supply," explains Hahnenberger, "Content needs to be refreshed in short cycles...it can even be weekly. Good quality is appreciated." Revenue is mainly on a share basis but percentages vary from carrier to carrier and aggregator to aggregator.

Hahnenberger's advice to mobile novices? "Don't do it alone and beware the Jabberwocky!" The Jabberwocky is, of course, the bottom line. ■

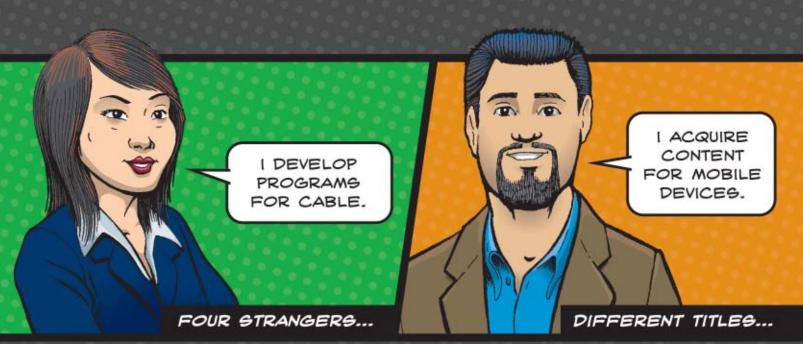
Chris Panzner admits to having contributed to the downfall of Western civilization. His interest in mobile technology may be a sign of its imminent demise. He recently created a writing company, Power Lines, and a production/distribution company, Eye & Ear.















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DIGITAL MAGIC



by Chris Grove

Music videos continued to raise the visual bar during a humdrum summer.

t might be an early autumn flare-up of a recurring mid-life crisis. Or it may just be that the summer movies of 2005 sucked so much that even a middle-aged guy who hasn't watched MTV regularly for, um, 15 years, thinks that some of the most interesting visual work lately is being created by the denizens of the music video world.

Case in point, the work coming out of Santa Monica-based broadcast design company Blind. Among the slew of Broadcast Design Awards they won recently was one for their work on Aussie band Jet's "Look What You've Done" video. (By the way, can we finally stop calling them music videos? Almost since

MTV's launch on August 1, 1981, they've been shot on film. Music film shorts. Oh, right. "I want my MTF." Never mind!)

The Jet's video is a seminar (and a great commercial) for the power of two of the most popular off-the-shelf Adobe products—Illustrator and After Effects. The mixing of the distinctly Beatles-esque song (with a piano track echoing the disembodied timbre of John Lennon's piano playing on "Imagine") with animation that's a dead-on homage to the best 2D Disney animation of the 1940s and 1950s only adds to the video's sustained but subtle emotional center.

Also definitely worthy of mention and some repeated viewings is the satirical work of the world's pre-eminent cartoon band, Gorillaz. What started as a tongue-in-cheek rip at the eye-glazing numbness of music videos with their hip hop clichés, synthetic boy bands and power ballad corporate girl-pop has burgeoned into a phenomenon of its own. "Feel Good Inc.," the first single from the band's platinum album *Demon Days* won Best Special Effects in a Video honors at the 2005 MTV Video Music Awards. Production company Passion Pictures created the visual f/x,

which include flying windmills and levitating landmasses. The video was directed by Gorillaz' co-creator Jamie Hewlett and Passion's Pete Candeland and produced by Cara Speller and Emilie Walmsley.

The result is a cool mixture of De La Soul funk (who appear in the video), echoes of The



Summer Sizzle: Gorillaz' "Feel Good Inc." and Jet's "Look What You've Done" videos delivered high-end eye candy.



Kinks, Japanese anime and images straight out of the mind of Jonathan Swift. On the technical side, key images were modeled, animated and lighted in CG using computer software Lightwave. The sense of space and freedom outside the band's tower home is suggested by huge bright painted cloud formations designed by art director Daniel Cacouault using Photoshop.

For De La Soul's live-action performance, cameras on a body rig were attached to the performers to achieve some of the distorted perspectives of their faces. This footage was treated at Rushes to create the lens flare in some of the shots and composited using Af-

ter Effects.

"After the huge success of the videos from the first album there was some trepidation about whether we could match or even surpass the vibrancy and dynamism of those films," says executive producer Andrew Ruhemann. "Thanks to a really beautiful track from Damon Albarn this video brings the Gorillaz back in a blaze of glory."

Though MTV doesn't have an award for it, best use of an American pop-culture icon in a 2005 video should go to Beck. The Silver Lake singer's "Girl," directed by Motion Theory, makes use of an extended and brilliantly executed visual motif—the fold-in page on the back cover of every Mad Magazine since that publication's inception in 1955. As one reviewer put it recently: "It's one of those ideas that's so simple that when you finally see it you're almost bound to think—'Why didn't I

think of that?"

The waif-thin Beck is seen in the video ambling around Echo Park, Silver Lake and Boyle Heights. In other words, the original and real Los Angeles that most Americans hardly ever see (except in the context of a Hollywood crime drama). In the video, a number of street scenes sud-

denly fold in on themselves like a giant, real-time version of *Mad Mag*'s Al Jaffee magazine invention. In perhaps the wryest sequence, a toy truck and car meld when the sidewalk they're resting on folds, creating a blue-and-yellow model Ranchero pickup car. In the next cut, Beck is seen driving a full-scale version of the car, warbling at the top of his lungs. If only the summer films of 2005 were something to sing as loudly about.

Chris Grove is a Los Angeles-based journalist specializing in visual effects. If you have any tips or suggestions for his monthly Digital Magic column, you can e-mail him at edit@animationmagazine.net.



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Tech Review Corner

Apple Final Cut Studio HD

That whimpering sound you hear in the corner of the room is Avid, licking its copious wounds. Starting life at Industrial Light & Magic as EditDroid, the Avid video editing systems over the years won numerous awards, and were credited with an almost total market share for film and broadcast editing. While a market share like that is enviable, it can also lead to apathy in innovation, and a chance for another company to dominate your business.



Enter Apple, circa 1999 or so, with Final Cut Pro, and the rest, as they say, is history. With a firm foothold in many creative industries already, Apple commoditized video editing, and turned anyone with a Macintosh into a potential Tarantino with a level of ease and affordability never seen previously.

Fast forward to the present and Apple seems intent on remaining at the forefront of the video editing and finishing business. I received a copy of Final Cut Studio HD for review, and was truly blown away by so many things, it's hard to know where to start. Full disclosure: I was using the suite of apps on a dual 2.7GHz G5 with 4GB of RAM, which is pretty much top of the line at this time, so from a speed perspective your results may differ, but it even ran pretty well on my ancient 500MHz Titanium Powerbook, albeit not anywhere near real time.

Final Cut Studio is a suite of four



apps: Final Cut Pro 5 HD, Apple Motion 2, DVD Studio Pro 4 and Soundtrack Pro. With these four applications, there is almost nothing you can't do from a video or sound perspective, and the apps all work seamlessly with each other, transferring files and projects back and forth as if they were all one program. Although I only had high-def video samples from Apple to work with and am not quite sure what compression they used, I was fully able to work with two streams of HD quality video in real time with no slow downs, crashes or other problems. For a desktop computer to do that is truly revolutionary.

Apple Motion is also a fantastic app, and was created primarily for doing motion graphics such as filmtitle sequences, broadcast graphics and crawls, and so on. I found Motion extremely easy to learn, but I also only scratched the surface of what it can do, and it looks like the company is committed to making this a fantastic video graphics tool on par with systems and software that cost ten times as much.

If you have watched any commercial DVD in the last couple of years, it would be a safe bet to say that it was authored with DVD Studio Pro. In only a few short years, this software has become the de facto standard for creating high-quality DVD projects, menu systems and navigating methods, and the depth and complexity of the app is stunning. Like its little brother iDVD, getting up to speed to do simple DVDs is deceptively simple, but the power lies in the way it approaches and allows you to deeply define DVD projects from almost any conceivable angle, to be a little punny. The approach the app takes in the way it allows you to link content and create multiple menus is elegant, yet very powerful. If George Lucas uses it, it must be pretty good, right?

As someone who is not a serious

by Chris Tome

sound editor, I found Soundtrack Pro to be a bit overwhelming, but I have used Sound Forge quite a bit, and I liked what I saw. The app also seamlessly integrates with Final Cut, and sound effects, loops and others can be added to your video projects with an amazing amount of control. As a 3D artist primarily, that's about all I can say about this program without regurgitating some marketing speak.

As with all things Apple these days, it seems they just keep hitting home runs, and Final Cut Studio is no exception. Almost all animators need some kind of video editing solution, and even if simple apps like iMovie and iDVD might suffice to get the job done, the level of control and the options this suite can bring to an animated production is worth a serious look for anyone going beyond editing and burning basic home movies.

On a side (but wholly relevant) note, I just have to say that this dual proc G5 is friggin' amazing! I would recommend anyone thinking about holding off the purchase of a new Mac to wait for the Intel machines reconsider, as these machines can easily hold their own compared to almost any Intel based PC out there. Also, I have heard through the rumor mill that dual core, dual proc G5's are on the way, and even if the "switch" to Intel has some Mac freaks in a tizzy, there's a ton of life left in the PowerPC Macs, and I believe that so much that I'm buying a Mac just like the one they loaned me. It, and Final Cut Studio are that good, and I am putting my money where my proverbial mouth is. Oh, and one final note, get a Mighty Mouse with your setup. it rocks! Two buttons on a Mac mouse? Who'da thunk it!

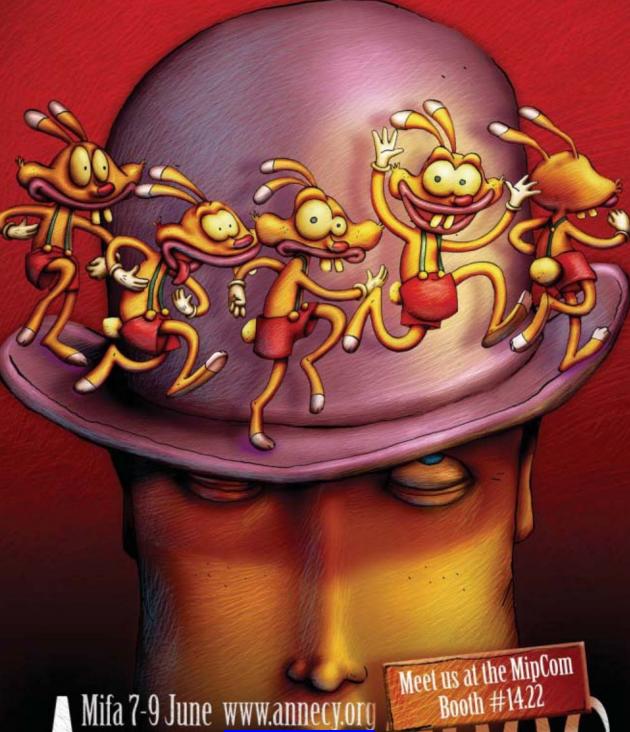
Website: www.apple.com/ finalcutstudio/finalcutpro

Price: \$999; upgrade from Final Cut Pro: \$399; upgrade from Final Cut

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Shootout at the FX Corral

Zoic circles the wagons for Joss Whedon's Serenity. by Ryan Ball

hose who sorely miss the shoot-first gunslinger character that helped make the first set of Star Wars films so much fun may be asking, "Where have all the cowboys gone?" The answer to that question just arrived in theaters in the form of Serenity, Joss Whedon's big-screen treatment of his short-lived FOX television series, Firefly. To help take his cult favorite space Western to the next level, Whedon got the posse back together, calling on the rough-and-ready buckaroos at Zoic, who won an Emmy for their work on Firefly.

The Zoic team was led by visual effects supervisors Randy Goux and Loni Peristere, who both worked on Whedon's Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel TV series in the late 'gos. Peristere went on to head up effects on Firefly, while Goux took jobs on The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring and the two Matrix sequels. Impressed with the work Zoic was doing on a television budget, Goux regretted not being part of the Firefly team. So when word got around that a feature was in the works, he jumped at the chance to help pilot Serenity.

"The artists at Zoic really captured something and totally ran with it when they had that show," Goux comments. "I came on board to help with my feature experience and make sure that these guys could take their talents and translate them to film."

Though TV effects work keeps getting better, audiences expect the best when they plunk down their nine bucks to be transported to other worlds. To make sure they didn't disappoint, the Zoic team devoted nearly a year to the pic and taking their game to the majors. "The film definitely needed to step up a little bit so it would be ready for the big screen," Goux admits. "It's still a Joss Whedon movie, so it's going to stay true to its roots with storytelling and character building and everything, but we had to make things kind of grandiose on the effects level."

Storyboarding the Space Battles

Since Firefly has done so well on DVD, Universal was confident that with Serenity, it would have a home video hit on its hands. However, everyone involved has been so determined to make it work as a theatrical release that the film has gone through a battery of tests and preview screenings aimed at generating buzz and troubleshooting elements that needed work. Goux elaborates, "There are large space battles between the Alliance and the [cannibalistic] Reavers, and if the audience didn't get it, we'd have to go in and make changes. We even re-storyboarded a whole sequence and started from scratch almost."

One vfx set piece that has been prominently featured in the trailers for the film is a high-speed hovercraft chase over a desert terrain. Goux tells us the scene was shot on California's Templin Highway, an abandoned two-lane blacktop that had to be digitally removed and replaced with brush. The hovercraft doing the chasing is completely CG, but the one our heroes are on was always hanging off the camera car on an arm that could move and tilt like a gimble. Zoic had to digitally remove the support rig so the vehicle appears to be floating on air. Goux remarks, "When you're doing full space battles and everything's in your control because you're not dealing with real plates and live-action stuff, you can just go to town. But when you're constrained by something that's in the plate, you start to get worried that it's going to take much more time than it should, but this one came out all right. It wasn't as hard as we thought it was going to be."

Goux is proud of Serenity's extensive digital matte painting work, which helps expand the scope of a film shot largely on soundstages. Part of the storyline involves teraforming, a violent mechanical process that makes an inhospitable planet habitable. "That's just a line in the script," says Goux, "but we at Zoic had to come through with that imagery, what that looks like. It's not just your standard, green meadow matte painting."

The vfx budget for Serenity was about an eighth of what Goux and his colleagues were working with on The Matrix Reloaded and The Matrix Revolutions, but Goux says he's a lot more excited about this latest sci-fi adventure. "One thing we learned from the Matrix movies is that if the story's not there, people aren't going to like your movie at all. I think, with this movie, there's a story there. And when you see the film, you'll see that our effects are just what the movie needs, no more and no less." Giddy up! ■

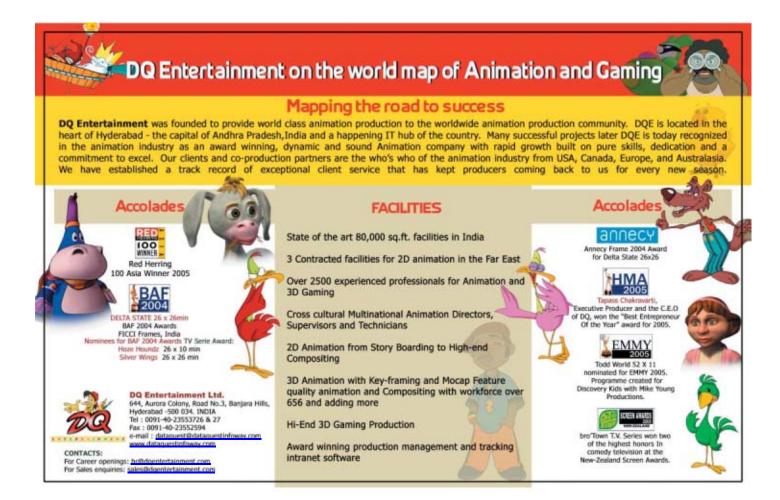
Serenity opened in theaters nationwide on September 30.

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Portent of *Doom*

Visual effects master Jon Farhat discusses the digital monsters of the high-octane space odyssey. by Ron Magid

ver 12 years ago, id Software revolutionized the first-person shooter genre by introducing fans to the 3D immersive and often-violent world of Doom. The seminal game offered a sinister and sexy combination of monstrous creatures pursued by-and pursuing-players who experienced the entire thrill ride through the eyes of their chosen avatars. In translating the game to the big screen, producers Lorenzo di Bonaventura and John Wells wanted to

give diehard fans and new converts alike a taste of the game in its purest form, and what better way than with an extended "firstperson shooter" sequence?

Visual effects supervisor Jon Farhat (Nutty Professor 1 and 2, The Interpreter) was brought in

to oversee Doom's diverse digital effects, an impressive 450-plus shots created at the U.K.'s Framestore CFC and Double Negative. Beyond visualizing some truly bizarre CG environments, Farhat wanted the companies to enhance and extend Stan Winston Studio's astounding creature effects, and in some cases to create Doom's monstrous menagerie entirely in their computers. "CG is really great for heads and very difficult for bodies," Farhat explains. "So in many cases, we would seam CG heads or body parts onto suits. Or Stan's team would make a mechanical head, but we'd say, 'Don't bother with the eyelids, or making a tongue shoot outwe'll do that and the slime coming out of its mouth in CG. So we really mixed and matched and everybody worked together: Stan's group and Double Negative and Framestore and Kit West's mechanical effects and the performers in the suits and the stunt people and the art directors."

"CG is really great for heads and very difficult for bodies, so in many cases, we would seam CG heads or body parts onto suits."

-Jon Farhat, Doom's visual effects supervisor

Along the way, Farhat managed to snag directing chores on the first-person shooter, originally envisioned as a fiveand-a-half-minute continuous POV shot replete with stunts, wirework, live action and digital creature effects and a whole lot more. "It's very reminiscent of the game," Farhat says. "John Grimm, played by Karl Urban, wakes up after an event, opens his eyes and from then on the audience sees everything from his POV for this five and a half minute sequence."

But while the sequence had to appear to be a single shot, in fact it was many shots and discreet elements seamed together to create the illusion of a single point of view. "We broke it down into some 60 different components," Farhat says. "I drew out the motion paths in plan form and worked with our storyboard artist, Martin Asbury; then we built a foam-core model of the sets that were available to us. Knowing we would need to make hookups [from one set to the next], we ran little lipstick cameras through the foam-core corridors. Then I cut an animatic together in Final Cut and we fine-tuned it. We even took our dedicated crew to the sets before they were finished and ran through with video cameras and cut that together. We would also do walk-throughs on

> the set every couple weeks or so with the stunt people, the physical effects and the wire guys and the people who were lighting our characters on fire and all of that, so by the time we shot we had a perfectly rehearsed crew."

According to Farhat, it took six months of prep work before they actually shot it. "The first half was live-action, which we shot over 14 days on the stage," he explains, "and the second half was almost totally computer generated, including the environment and the characters, mixed with a little bit of live action."

The tour-de-force sequence had its own dedicated crew shooting on stages in the Czech Republic. "It was a movie in itself," Farhat states. "We had a first per-

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son shooter unit, almost entirely a Czech crew. I had an AD and a producer, and I was directing the unit. It was an event."

The live-action footage was incredibly challenging. "We shot everything with a 21mm lens which replicates human eyesight," Farhat says. "We rehearsed the whole thing in one take, and the crew just did that over and over. Then we said, 'We can end day two here,' 'We can end day three there,' but at the beginning and the end of every segment, we had to have planned the beginning and the end of the next segment. Of course we did the obvious hookups, like a door opens and we greenscreened the other side, but we also had hookups where we slowly panned across the set to the next day's setup using Steadicam. The funny thing was, [despite the] hookups, we still had two-minute takes, involving 30 people! We had five or six stunt guys and things were going off everywhere and people were flying all over the place. The stunt guys had to fall, but as the camera passed over them, they had to get out of the way. By the time we finished our shot, we had a trail of crew behind us, all trying to get out, and god forbid the last guy missed his mark because then we'd have to start all over again!"

To remind the audience that they were seeing things from Grimm's perspective, Farhat placed mirrors throughout the set where Urban's "reflection" was later added. Whenever Grimm raised his gun or looked down and saw his legs, those were hand animated digital elements. But the transition from mostly live action to completely digital in the sequence's last act, where Grimm confronts the wheelchair bound monstrosity called Pinky, was tricky.

Farhat understood that if the eyeless demon with the oversized choppers wasn't the most compelling character ever, audiences would check out of the sequence and all his fancy footwork and seamless hookups would be for naught. Fortunately, Farhat had a great collaborator in Framestore lead animator Kevin Spruce and his crew, who modeled and animated primarily in Maya (with some additional modeling in Lightwave), composited in Shake and rendered with Render-Man. "We had a wonderful team of lighters, animators and rigger Mike Mulholland,





but Kevin was the heart and soul of Pinky," Farhat states. "While we were shooting in Prague, Kevin was working on the CG and we'd e-mail Quicktimes back and forth for a good three, four months, getting the gray shades done."

To keep Pinky interesting in those final minutes without any place to cut to for dramatic emphasis, Farhat continually challenged the audience and Grimm. "We chose, like the game, to move in and out of pools of light, to lose him and find him, but most of all, I think you just have to really give the character character, and a lot of things to do-this guy's chasing you, you're chasing it. I wanted it to be a really good slug fest, so that Pinky one-upped Grimm, then John one-upped Pinky and back and forth. You have to wonder all the way through, 'Who's going to win?' The first-person shooter sequence builds; it gets more and more amazing as you go deeper and deeper into this hell, just like the game, and the Pinky demon battle is just exquisite. It was a candy store, and the beauty was that these animators are Doom fans so they know what it needed to be. They're the audience."

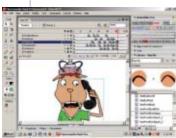
And the movie's audience will be thankful once the feature hits the screens this fall.

Universal's Doom opens in theaters nationwide on October 21.

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Make Toons Faster with New Flash Extension

ou can file this one under necessity being the mother of toon invention: Los Angeles-based animator and creative mind Warren Scott Fuller has come up with a fantastic new animation extension that should make life a lot easier for Flash animators all over the world. After years



working experimenting with Macromedia's Flash program, Fuller decided to create an extension that would speed

up the character animation process.

Last month, Fuller launched his cool new AnimSlider Pro Flash Extension which adds to Flash a special user interface slider that allows for real-time symbol swapping of characters' eyes, mouths, heads, arms, etc. "I felt there was a need for this tool since Version 4 of Flash, but it was with Version 7 that Macromedia introduced an environment that allowed animators to create their own extension," he notes, "and that's what I did!"

Fuller, who has had years of experience as an animator and vfx artist (South Park, Scooby-Doo 2 and Garfield: The Movie are some of his recent credits.), says as flexible and efficient as Flash is, he just knew there was a way to devise a short cut.

"Instead of going through multiple steps

to access character body part symbols, AnimSlider Pro gives the animator access through one user interface, which is the slider," he explains. "It's a real handy tool that is good for all Flash character animators, and it's especially helpful for professionals working Warren on TV series and web projects under tight deadlines."



AnimSlider Pro works on both Windows and Macs running Macromedia Flash 8 and the older Flash MX 2004 (7.2). A free limited trial version along with other free tools to help speed up the Flash character animation process are also available. You can also check out some of Fuller's own Flash-animated projects (Sheeps, which played at SIGGRAPH a couple of years ago and Hamsters, his current TV show pitch) on his website. ■

The AnimSlider Pro Flash Extension is priced at \$45 and can be ordered at www.animonger.com.

It's in the Click

SpaceBall, 3Dconexxion's two-handed mousing system, relieves pains for 3D software users. by Sarah Gurman

bout five years ago Miles Germer, a modeler and texturer at gaming powerhouse Snowblind studios, began experiencing severe pain in his shoulders, arms and hands due to the repetitive motions he used when working with 3D design software. Germer visited doctors, researched on the web and even looked into a foot-operated mouse. For two years he wore wrist and elbow braces while he slept and sometimes at work. "I was just feeling tons of pain and was getting really worried because this is my livelihood," he says.

Luckily, he ran across 3Dconnexion's SpaceBall on the net and tried it for a month. Five hundred dollars later, Germer was using the two-handed modeling system with relatively no pain, and raving about the motion controller's ball navigation and applications. "It's as smooth as butter," he says. "You push it and it's like you're holding the model in the real world."

The SpaceBall 5000 is designed to enhance 3D software applications, working in conjunction with a traditional mouse to allow a more balanced twohanded working style: one hand can pan, rotate or zoom with the SpaceBall while the other hand se-

lects and edits with the mouse. The motion controller also features 12 keys that can be programmed to keyboard functions. Germer notes, "What I love about the SpaceBall is that I can just map the keys to the Shift, Alt and control buttons, and then I just sit there. I work like I'm flying a spaceship with each hand in front of me: one's just mousing and one's turning the model and I never touch the keyboard."

After receiving positive feedback from customers. 3Dconnexion decided to commission a pain study to explore how the SpaceBall 5000 affected the efficiency and comfort level of users. Barry Smith, an independent consultant at VSI Risk Management and Ergonomics, spearheaded the study, conducting two surveys to see how the SpaceBall influenced participants after one month of use, and then after six months.

When the results came in, 3Dconnexion and its customers had something to smile abut: After one month of working with the motion controller participants who initially indicated moderate to severe pain reported their pain was reduced 61% to mild (the user is aware of discomfort, but they are able to ignore it). And after six months their total average pain had decreased 77%

down to the boundary of no pain and mild pain. Overall, 97% of survey subjects who had reported significant pain prior to the study, experienced reduced pain when using the SpaceBall. Smith says,

"3Dconnexion had already received some feedback from its users that prompted the study, but we were surprised how big the drop was in a short time."

Because the SpaceBall spreads the workload over two hands and changes the motion used to navigate, Germer is able to continue working with professional 3D graphics. "I still have minor pain, but if what I was

feeling before was at like a nine, now I'm at a two," he says "And that's really only after working for a while. I haven't stopped working, I just changed the way I work."

Most recently Germer modeled character body armor for Snowblind's Champions-Return to Arms. "This should just ship with studio max," he says. "It should just be stan-Germer dard with 3D modeling software." ■



The SpaceBall 5000 is available for \$499 at www.3dconnexion.com. For more info on ergonomic pain studies, contact Barry Smith at barry_smith@pacbell.net.

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Date	Nov. 16 Wednesday	NOV.	17 Inursday	Nov. 18 Friday		
Venue	Room 401	Room 320	Room 321	Room 320	Room 321	
Track	Convergence Policy	Business Affairs	Global Update	Consumer Trends	Promax & BDA	
10:00-11:10	Keynote	K	eynote	E de desse	The Art Of Beautiful Promos	
11:20~12:30	Is IPTV the future of TV?	Investment: Mergers and Acquisitions	Digital Innovation in Content Distribution	Evolution of Advertisement	Best Of Three Worlds - North America	
14:00~15:10	Getting Mobile: How togive your content legs.	How will terrestrial TV compete in the digital era?	Selling into Asia: Which trends are driving the ratings	Consumer & Market Capacity of New Services	Best Of Three Worlds - Asia	
15:30~16:40	DMB In Korea, now on the rise	Formats Forum I Television Formats	Future exports: What will be the next Asian phenomenon	Screening Event	Designing with Purpose	
17:00~18:00	Keynote	Formats Forum II Formats Screenings	International Documentary Co-production Forum		Best Of Three Worlds - Europe	
18:00~20:00	KBC Opening Party	VIP Dinner Reception				

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State of the Art

Attack of the Killer Rays

How ILM developed those dazzling disintegration effects in Steven Spielberg's War of the Worlds. by Barbara Robertson

aul Franklin, visual effects supervisor at Double Negative asks: How did they create the amazing death-ray disintegration effects in War of the Worlds?

When the war began, the sky turned dark and lightning struck an intersection in New Jersey, so

many strikes that a hole appeared in the pavement. From the depths of the earth, creature-like machines corkscrewed up into daylight, cracking through the street, toppling cars and ripping off the front of a church. All the neighbors, including Tom Cruise, stepped back and stared in horrified fas-

cination. For a second we wondered, as we imagined the people in the intersection wondering, whether the creatures—or were they vehicles?—were friendly. Then, the tripods started moving, somehow balancing their heavy metal heads on three 140-foot-tall spindly legs. The movement was fluid, almost graceful. As soon as we realized the motion looked menacing, they started shooting.

What they shot were beams of light, but not exactly light. The death rays looked more organic

'We designed the laser beam completely in compositing using Inferno particles and [Gen-Arts'] Sapphire plug-ins. Steven didn't want something that looked like a beam; he wanted something more organic."

—ILM compositor Sebastien Moreau

than laser beams. The first shot hit a man on the street and, oh my god, he disintegrated-disappeared. His clothes floated to the ground. The tripods kept shooting.

Industrial Light & Magic created all the visual effects for Paramount Pictures' War of the Worlds in a record-setting 12 weeks of post production time. Steven Spielberg directed the film; co-visual effects supervisors Dennis Muren and Pablo Helman directed the work on the film's 47 minutes of visual effects. ILM compositor Sebastien Moreau designed and helped create the death ray laser beams and the disintegration they caused, and he answers this month's question.

"We started with the intersection shot, the first time the tripods shoot, and when that was approved by Steven [Spielberg], we worked on the others," Moreau says. "There were maybe a dozen disintegration shots."

The rays destroy buildings and cars, but the disintegration happens only to human bodies. Thus,

during filming the crew had actors playing potential victims pretend to be hit and fall to the ground. Later, while looking at the plates, Dennis Muren selected which people would explode. Once he picked the victims of disintegration, ILM's roto department removed them and reconstructed the plates.

When Moreau got the shots, the plates had the 3D models of the tripods

already composited in and the victim removed near the point where the body would explode. Moreau and the other compositors working in the ILM's Sabre group added the death rays and the explosions.







(ILM built its Sabre system around Autodesk Media & Entertainment's Inferno.)

"We designed the laser beam completely in compositing," Moreau says of the death ray, "using Inferno particles and [GenArts'] Sapphire plug-ins. Steven didn't want something that looked like a beam; he wanted something more organic." To get the look Spielberg wanted, Moreau used Inferno's 3D particles for their realistic movement within the death ray, distorted the particle beam with Sapphire plug-ins, added texture by blending in smoke elements and changed and animated colors until Spielberg approved. Moreau found the smoke elements—bits of real, filmed smoke—in ILM's library.

Once Spielberg approved the death ray, Moreau began designing the disintegration effect. "When the laser hits people, they freeze, transform into stone and then explode," he says. "ILM had created concept art so I had references, but those explosions were fierier than what we ended up doing."

They ended up turning people into stone and then into smoke—just their skin, not their clothes. The stone transformation happens quickly; it lasts only long enough to register the feeling.

To create that frozen part of the effect, the compositors extracted the skin from the fallen actors in the plate and replaced it with a stone texture that they tracked in with the camera move. "We tried filters and plug-ins, but the 2D texture was best," Moreau says.

Then, they created the impression that only the body was exploding, not the clothes. For this they used puffs of smoke shot for this effect. "We shot tons of different types of smoke puffs like little sand explosions," Moreau says. "We put these elements on the heads, feet, bellies, necks, faces—everywhere there was skin. We needed to create the feeling that the smoke was coming from inside the clothes."

To create the effect of suddenly bodiless clothes, ILM's production department found

clothes that matched the actors' costumes. They positioned those clothes on the ground in the same position as the actors in the plate and filmed the garments. Then, they hung the clothes on wires, turned on a fan, and filmed the clothes blowing away.

The result wasn't exactly what Steven wanted. "Steven wanted the clothes to blow higher, but we hadn't shot that," Moreau says. So, the compositors animated each piece of clothing separately, changing the speed, faster, slower, until they had created the effect Spielberg had in mind.

Although once the test shot was approved, subsequent shots were easier to produce, each shot was different. In one, for example, the death ray hits a person inside a car. When the driver disintegrates, the force pushes the car several feet, the death ray swipes under the car, and the car flips over.

"The flipping car was 3D," says Moreau. "We did match moves of that car to the real car in the plate, and composited smoke drifting from the windows."

For that shot and others, the compositors took advantage of Inferno's 3D camera to help organize and control the elements.

"We wanted particles close to the camera moving faster," says Moreau. "We could animate the laser beam, and it would react in 3D, not just as a 2D trick."

For long establishing shots with small beams, the compositors used pre-rendered streaks of particles that they layered in sideways. When the beams caused people to explode, they added laser light and lens flares to the smoke elements.

"We did a lot of color corrections and color lighting within Sabre," says Moreau. "We had lots of lens flares and light interaction. Most of these shots have hundreds of layers."

All told, Moreau worked on *War of the Worlds* for around three months, compositing death rays, disintegrating people, destroying cars and buildings and fitting these effects layer after layer after layer into plates already filled with dust and smoke.

"It was really fun, especially the design work which was challenging," he says. "And working for Steven was great. He knows what he wants, and he's a real gentleman."

Moreau's question, however, is not about a nice, gentlemanly effect: "In the scary movie, The Exorcism of Emily Rose, who did the scary f/x of peoples' faces changing into demon faces and how did they do it? (Like the person in the car or the people walking on the street, that woman under the umbrella, or the guy in the classroom.)

Barbara Robertson is an entertainment journalist who specializes in computer graphics, animation and visual effects. If you have a State of the Art question, e-mail her at brobertson@animationmagazine.net



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Still from Pixel Corps' Photshop training video.

he terms "grass roots" and "visual effects" don't usually appear together, especially with respect to learning the latest digital techniques. But we're happy to report that there's now a movement afoot called Pixel Corps that's helping fledgling visual effects artists learn together in structured ways. Like a grass roots virtual community, members of this movement work on assignments both alone and in small teams and use an online forum to post questions and advice.

Pixel Corps is the vision of ex-ILMer Alex Lindsay, who taught himself enough Electric Image to eventually land a job on Star Wars: Episode I. The more he witnessed a complex production pipeline, the more convinced he became that there was a need to train an army of craftsmen in a standardized way. "Pixel Corps borrows the guild model from the Middle Ages," he explains. "Those were truly collections of freelancers. Today, companies would love to ramp up as needed for a production, but it's risky to train artists and then let them go. I think everyone would love to have a consistent stock of trained people to draw upon."

Lindsay, who has taught at San Francisco State and The Academy of Art, believes that professional-quality field assignments are preferable to classrooms for learning visual effects. "We're not a school, but we work with teachers at schools like The Art Institutes to help move towards standardized training."

Although Pixel Corps started informally with sessions in Lindsay's San Francisco company, dvGarage, by 2002 there were 250 paying members. "By 2004, when we went online, we grew from 250 to 1,200 members in a week." Memberships cost from \$150 for three months to \$420 per year. A membership starter kit contains 80 hours of video training, covering topics from motion capture to photogrammetry, with an additional hour of material supplied each week.

Another lure is the chance to test drive software (like Softimage|XSI and Shake) free for go days. Pixel Corps members can then purchase applications "at outrageous discounts," says Lindsay, "as much as 80% off. We're trying to arm our troops with stuff they can use."

Pixel Corps has attracted some diverse mem-

Training the Digital Troops

Pixel Corps offers a new way of training visual effects artists. by Ellen Wolff

bers, spread across 36 countries. Many of them work in teams to create short projects that train them in specific techniques. At the Pittsburgh, Pa., branch of Pixel Corps, Ed Hassenfratz is learning CG after years "as a Photoshop and After Effects guy." Hassenfratz, an art director at NBC affiliate WPXI, leads (in his off hours) a team that's working on motion graphics. They collaborate via Pixel Corps' ftp server and online forum, as well as apps like Apple's iChat. "We've got team members in Zimbabwe, Spain, Alaska and New York City." While he admits it takes a major commitment to work on a Pixel Corps team, Hassenfratz believes that learning how to collaborate remotely will be an essential skill in the future. "Those who can do that best will get the work."

Pixel Corps projects are pro bono, but Lindsay



says "Members who take on these projects get high-quality plates to work on, and they get to understand what it's like to be in production." Assignments have included creating web material for BattleBots, the broadband show Mac Break and effects for a variety of independent films. "It's a virtual training network, but also a virtual production network, and a huge experiment in doing production globally."

It's also Lindsay's hope that Pixel Corps members will hire each other when opportunities arise, and there's some indication that's starting to happen. Pixel Corps member Scott Broock, who produces on-air promos for Nickelodeon in NYC, was able to recommend a fellow member for a Nick assignment. "He had a motion capture studio in Pittsburgh and was able to assist on a project. The Pixel Corps is a distributed network of talented people. As a producer, I can leverage their talents, and put together an excellent ad hoc team on a case by case basis."

Lindsay hopes to have a Pixel Corps certification process in place by the end of 2006. "Skill tests will be administered 'martial arts style.' No take-home tests." This will help potential employers know what they're getting, believes Lindsay. "In the future we'd like to have a database that visual effects houses can search when they're looking for people to hire."







Edward J. Hassenfratz





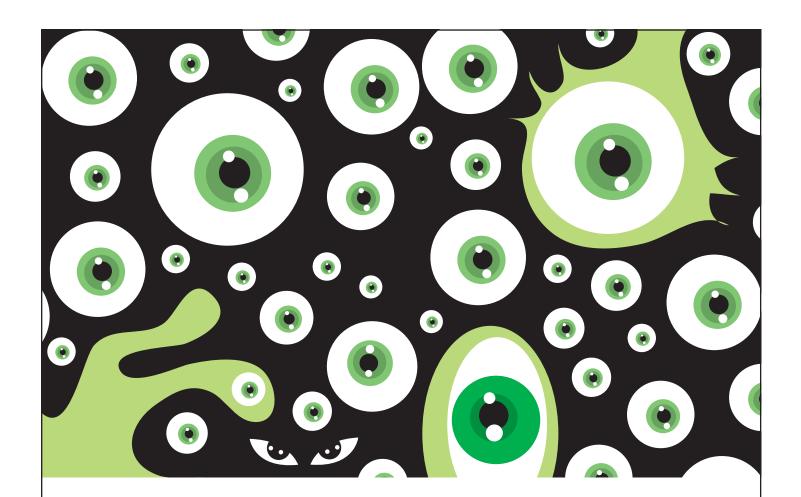
Greg Durrett

Durrett observes, "Because of the high-quality assets that I cut my teeth on, my demo reel didn't look like it came out of a book of tutorials. If all you have to show is your take on a tutorial, a beleaguered visual effects supervisor is going to think, 'Oh no, how many versions of this do I have to look at?"

While many Pixel Corps members want to work professionally in visual effects, an astonishing 17% are retired. Lindsay recalls, "When I asked one of them why he joined, he said 'It keeps me active. It's fun, and it costs less than

Ellen Wolff is a Los Angeles-based journalist who focuses on visual effects, CG animation and education.





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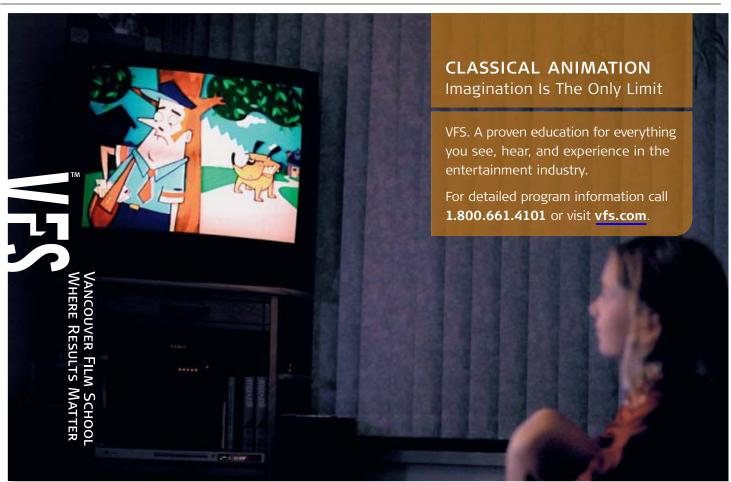
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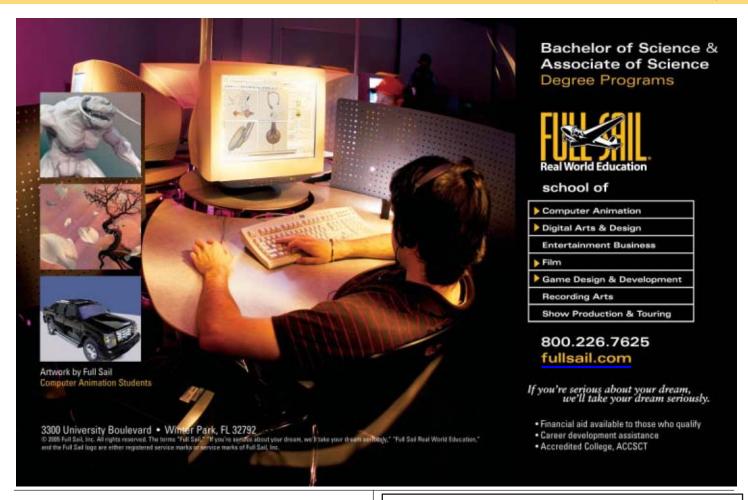


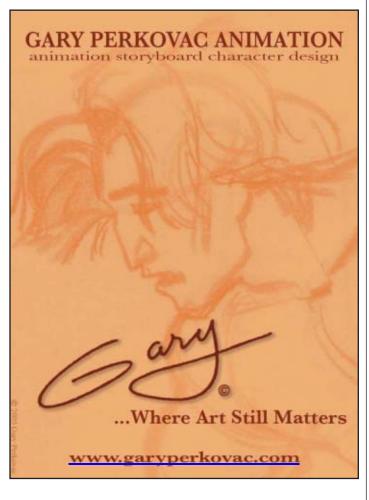














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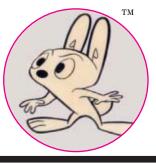
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Guangzhou Int'l Comics Exhibition	Oct. 3-6	Guangzhou, China	www.toprepute.com.hk
Woodstock Film Festival	Oct. 5-9	Woodstock, NY	www.woodstockfilmfestival.com
New Orleans Film Festival	Oct. 6-13	New Orleans, LA	www.neworleansfilmfest.com
Indie Games Con	Oct. 7-9	Eugene, OR	www.indiegamescon.com
Heartland Film Festival	Oct. 13 - 21	Indianapolis, IN	www.heartlandfilmfest.org
MIPCOM Jr.	Oct. 15-16	Cannes, France	www.mipcomjunior.com
Macromedia MAX 2005	Oct. 16-19	Anaheim, CA	www.macromedia.com/macromedia/events/max/
Cork Film Festival	Oct. 16-23	Cork, Ireland	www.corkfilmfest.org
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Annual Austin Film Festival	Oct. 20-27	Austin, TX	www.austinfilmfestival.com
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Brand Licensing Show	Oct. 25-26	London, U.K.	www.brandlicensingexpo.com
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A Day in the Life

We asked the creative team at London-based animation house **Tandem Films** to give us a sneak peek at their daily lives. Last year, the company produced the award-winning How to Cope with Death, and this year, Daniel Greaves' hilarious Little Things short has been a huge hit on the festival circuit. We have no idea what they were thinking when they sent this strip over to us, but we wish them even more success in 2006. You can visit their website (www.tandemfilms.com) for more info.























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